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In Memoriam

Ruth Candler Lovett

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CRICHTON.

VOL. I.

CRICHTON.

BY W. HARRISON AINSWORTH, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF "ROOKWOOD."

Ergo, flos juvenum, Scotiæ spes, Palladis ingens,
Ereptumque decus Musarum e dulcibus ulnis,
Te, quamvis sileant alii, Crichtone. poetæ,
Teque, tuamque necem nunquam mea Musa silebit.

ABERNETHY. *Musa Campestris.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY,
NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

MDCCCXXXVII.

THOMAS CURSON HANSARD, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

P R E F A C E.

Le Baron.—De la patience, mesdames, monsieur consignera toutes ses idées dans la préface de son ouvrage.

La Vicomtesse.—Est-ce que vous faites une préface ?

Le Baron.—Les romantiques font tous des préfaces.

A. DUMAS. *Antony : Acte IV. Scene VI.*

It may, perhaps, surprise Mr. Patrick Fraser Tytler (to whom we are indebted for the best life that has yet appeared of the Admirable Scot) to learn that the “unknown writer” of the *affiche*, recently discovered in the Cortegiano of Castiglione —“the earliest, and from the information it communicates the most valuable, of the

contemporary accounts of Crichton*”—is a person of no less authority than the younger Aldus. Such, however, is the fact. The placard printed by the brothers Domenico and Battista Guerra, preserved by that worthy collector of rare imprints Messer Francisco Melchiori of Venice, detected by Mr. G. Hibbert of Clapham, and cited by Mr. Fraser Tytler, is a surreptitious copy of a communication addressed by Aldus Manutius to the Duke of Sora. This assertion I shall presently substantiate by the production of the letter in question.

During Crichton's residence in Venice in the autumn of the year 1580; when, as he himself has told us,

*Dum procul a Patria Hadriaci prope litora Ponti
Consedi,——*

when his eloquence had electrified the Doge and the assembled Signory—when

* Tytler's Life of Crichton, p. 86. Second Edition.

he had disputed *in utramque partem* upon the subtle doctrines of the Thomists and Scotists (*a parte rei, et a parte mentis*) with the learned Padre Fiamma, *e con molti altri valorosi prelati*, in the presence of the Cardinal Ludovico D'Este, the patron of Tasso, and the brother of Alfonso II., Duke of Ferrara; had discussed with the Greek theologians, in the house of the Patriarch of Aquileia, the mysterious subject of the procession of the Holy Ghost, overwhelming his opponents with the weight of authorities which he adduced; had astonished the ready Italian improvisatore by a faculty more wonderful than his own; had confounded the mathematician, the astrologer and the cabalist; had foiled the most expert swordsman, and the most brilliant wit at their own weapons—when his grace and beauty had captivated many a fair

signora, and his unequalled prowess in the revel and the masque had driven many a rival gallant to despair; and when, at length, satiated with enjoyment, and crowned with success, to escape from the enervating allurements of the sea Phryne, he crossed her blue lagoons, and secluded himself in some villa on the Brenta, to prepare for that final triumph which he was destined so gloriously to achieve in the three days disputation held in the Chiesa San Giovanni e Paolo; then it was, that Aldus Manutius, prompted by his ardent admiration of the youthful Scot, or urged to the task by the curiosity of his noble correspondent, furnished Giacomo Buoncompagno, Duke of Sora, an eminent patron of men of letters, and brother to the reigning Pontiff Gregory XIII. with the following particulars of the *mostro de mostri*.

RELATIONE *della qualita di* JACOMO DI CRET-
TONE *fatta da* ALDO MANUTIO AL DUCA DI
SORA *Adi x Ottobre, 1581.**

Lo SCOZZESE detto Giacomo di Crettone è giovane di xx anni, finiti alli 19 d'agosto passato, grande di statura, di pelo biondo, e d'aspetto bellissimo. Possiede diece lingue, la latina più bella et più pronta di quella di Monsignore Moretto,† la

** Relatione delle qualita di Giacomo di Crettone fatta da Aldo Manutio all' Illustrimo ed eccellentissimo S. Jacomo Boncompagno Duca di Sora e Gover. Gen. di S. C. In Venegia, M. DLXXXI. Appresso Aldo.*

† The famous Marcus Antonius Muretus, the friend of the Manutii, and one of the most profound scholars of his day. He was succeeded in the Roman chair of philosophy by the younger Aldus. The wonderful skill of Muretus in Latin versification will readily be conceived when it is stated that he palmed certain scenes of his own composition upon the learned Joseph Scaliger as fragments of two ancient comic writers, Attius and Trabea, which that great philologist unhesitatingly introduced into his edition of Terentius Varro. This talent, however, remarkable as it is, does not seem to be confined to the scholastic wits of the sixteenth century. Certain pleasantries, equally ingenious, have been recently practised by our modern Muretus, FATHER PROUT, whose latin verses would have imposed upon a Boxhorn, a Sigonio, or even old Scaliger himself.

Francese ed Italiana in eccellenza, la Greca bellissima e ne fa epigrammi, l'Hebrea, la Caldea, la Spagnuola, la Fiamenga, Inglesa, Scozzesa, e intende la Tedesca. Possiede Filosofia, Theologia, Mathematica, ed Astrologia, e tiene tutti i calcoli fatti sin ad hoggi per falsi. Di Filosofia e Theologia ha disputato più volte in questa Città con li primi letterati di questa professione con stupore di tutti. Ha perfettissima cognitione della Cabala, e di memoria tale che non sà che cosa sia il dimenticarsi ed ogni oratione udita da lui recita a parola per parola. Fa versi all' improvviso di tutti li metri, e di tutte le materie vulgare e latine e ne fa improvise e belle. Ragiona di cose di stato con fondamento. Cortegiano con maravigli e gratissimo nelle consultationi, soldato à tutta botta, e ha speso due anni in Francia alla guerra con carico assai honorato; salta e balla per eccellenza; armeggia e giuoca d'ogni sorta d'armi e ne ha fatto qui la prova; maneggiatore aggarbato di cavalli, giostratore singolare, di sangue nobile anzi

per madre Regale Stuardo.* Ha disputato con greci in casa del Nuntio e del Patriarca d'Aquileia in materia della processione del Spirito Santo con grande applauso e con grandissima copia d'autorità de Dottori e consigli come Aristotele e commentatori alle mani recitando le facciate intiere

* Compare the above description with the following passage from the Dedication to the Paradoxes of Cicero, subsequently published by Aldus:—*Magna sunt ista profecto, et inaudita : mediocria tamen, si cetera spectemus ; quod, scilicet decem linguarum, multorum idiomatum, omnium disciplinarum cognitionem ante vigessimum primum ætatis annum, sis adeptus ; et digladiandi, saltandi, omnium gymnasticarum exercitationum, et equitandi studia, tanta cum alacritate ingenii, animique humanitate, mansuetudine, et facilitate conjunxeris, ut nihil te admirabilius reperiri possit. Sed non innumerabiles vitæ tuæ transactæ laudes ; non mirificam illam coram Serenissimo Principe ac Illustrissimis Venetæ Reipublicæ proceribus actionem ; non subtilissimas tuas de Theologia, philosophia et rebus Mathematicis, disputationes in plerisque maximorum hominum concessibus, recensebo ; non tantorum hominum ad te videndum concursum, ut olim Platoni a Sicilia revertenti, relicto Olympico spectaculo, tota Atheniensium celebritas occurrisse fertur ; cum te omnes, signo rubeæ Rosæ, quod tibi natura circa dextrum lumen impressit, tamquam unicam et raram in terris avem, homines cognoscerent.*

non che le righe greche. Sà tutto S. Thomaso, Scoto, Thomisti e Scotisti a mente, e disputa in utramque partem, il che ha fatto felicemente l'altro giorno col Padre Fiamma, e con molti altri valorosi Prelati alla presenza di Monsignore Illustrissimo il Cardinale da Este. Volsse il Patriarca e la Signoria udirlo e ne restorono maravigliosi e stupefatti; da S. Serenità fù premiato di 200 scudi. In somma è mostro de mostri, e tale che molti udendo così fatte qualità in un sol corpo benissimo proportionato e lontano dalla malinconia fanno di molte chimere. Hierì si ridusse fuori in villa, per stendere due mila conclusioni le quali in tutte le perfettione vole mantenere qui in Venetia nelle Chiesa di S. Giovan e Paolo; fra due mesi tutto il mondo corre per udirlo.

There is only one perplexing point about this letter; and could I follow my Uncle Toby's advice to Corporal Trim, and "leave

out the *date* entirely," much tedious speculation might be spared. For the genuineness of the edition in my possession—that it is actually, as its title states, *appresso Aldo*—I cannot vouch. Counterfeits of the productions of this celebrated press are too numerous and too skilful to suffer me to hazard such an assertion. But at all events, it is, beyond doubt, a *fac-simile* of the original. Obtained from Milan, my copy consists of a few leaves, yellow with age, with the device of the elder Aldus on the title-page, and purports to have been printed “*in Venegia, M. DLXXXI.*” The memoir is not mentioned by Renouard; nor is it included in the small quarto volume of the letters of Aldus Manutius, published at Rome, none of which, as Dr. Black observes, (for I have not seen the collection) is written prior to 1585. Having premised thus much I shall proceed with my reasons for the emen-

dation of the date, which, I conceive, should be the *tenth of October, 1580, not 81*. From another contemporary authority (a manuscript chronicle cited by Serassi, the writer of which evidently derived his information from Aldus) we learn that Crichton reached Venice, "*nel mese d'Agosto del 1580.*" Coupling this intelligence with the final passage, of the *Relatione*, "*fra due mesi tutto il mondo corre per udirlo,*" we have the exact period of his arrival and departure, and my hypothesis is confirmed. He remained in Venice two months. And here I may note that the *affiche* (the date of which is 1580) is made, owing to its faulty punctuation, to announce to the learned world, that Crichton's disputation in the Church of Saint John and Paul, would take place *within two months*; whereas we are expressly told by Aldus Manutius, who was not only the adviser, but a specta-

tor, of this memorable controversy, that it commenced on the day of Pentecost, 1581. Aldus, indeed, seems to refer to some such panegyric as this *Relatione*, when he states in the Dedication to the Paradoxes of Cicero, “*nunc vero etiam lætor, toti Italiæ, et orbi fortasse terrarum universo perspectum esse iudicium de te meum, ET EA QUÆ CUM HUC VENISSES SCRIPTIS COMMENDAVI;*” and mark what follows, “*quæ tibi ipsi, ac nonnullis acerrimis censoribus, aspera atque injucunda videbantur. Nam, licet tum amorem malui ostendere, quam prudentiam, nunc ambo, cum amicis tuis, tum inimicis, si qui amplius tam feri atque inhumani reperiuntur, manifesta sunt, postquam tua virtus tam clarum sui splendorem diffudit.*” Influenced by a desire to serve his friend, the great printer, may have allowed his letter to the Duke of Sora to be widely circulated, and perhaps connived at its publication by the

brothers Guerra, for which injudicious zeal he appears to have incurred the censure, as well of the high-minded object of his adulation, as of those envious detractors, which a celebrity like that of Crichton was certain to awaken. That Dr. Black, after a careful investigation of the collected letters of Aldus, could only discover this solitary passage, which he thinks may relate to Crichton.—“ *Sa V. S. Illustrissima, che io sempre 'functus sum officio cotis, e deve ricordarsi dello Scozzese, il quale godè la benignità, e liberalità di cotesta Republica, favorito anche da lei, che si mosse e per favorir lui, e per obbligar me—*” proves nothing. Aldus might not probably desire to introduce his letter to Buoncompagno in a volume containing a similar eulogy on the Polish Crichton, Stanislaus Niegossevio, addressed to the same nobleman.

It follows, from what has been advanced,

that upon the validity of the evidence afforded by Aldus Manutius --whether considered as the author or originator of the *Affiche*, the *Relatione*, the manuscript Chronicle, or the Dedication to the Paradoxes, (for they are one and the same thing) rests Crichton's claim to that glorious epithet by which he has since been distinguished. His mighty intellectual powers are attested by Astolfo and Scaliger; but his universal accomplishments and personal graces are recorded by Imperialis, Dempster, David Buchanan, Johnston, and other later writers on the testimony of Aldus.* And that testimony, notwithstanding

* It may be curious to glance at the different terms of eulogy applied to Crichton by various authors. By Aldus Manutius in the *Relatione* and the *Affiche*, he is styled "*mostro de mostri*;" by the same writer in the Dedication to the Paradoxes of Cicero, "*unicam et raram in terris avem*;" and in the address prefixed to the Dialogue *de Amicitia* "*divinum plene juvenem*;" by Astolfi, "*mostro maraviglioso*;" by Imperialis, "*sæculi monstrum—orbis phœnix—*

it has been impugned by Doctors Kippis and Black, has been satisfactorily shown by Mr. Fraser Tytler to be unimpeachable.

If any proof, indeed, were wanting of the sincerity of Aldus's affection for, and admiration of, his friend, it would be found in the following pathetic lament, which (deceived by a false rumour of Crichton's death) he inscribed to his memory.

ALDUS MANUTIUS TO THE MEMORY OF
JAMES CRICHTON.

“ O Crichton, it is just that praise should attend thy memory, since we have been deprived of thee by an untimely death! Who is there that did not admire thee in life? who that does not mourn thee dead? *While alive, the judgment I had*

dæmonium prorsus;” by Scaliger, *ingenium prodigiosum;*” Boccacini, (satirically) “ *il portento di natura;*” by Rotinus, *Phœnix Critonius;*” by Ronconius, “ *Ingenio Phœnix;*” by Dempster, “ *miraculum orbis;*” by Johnston *omnibus in studiis admirabilis;*” by Abernethy, “ *Juvenis incomparabilis;*” and by Sir Thomas Urquhart he was first entitled, “ THE ADMIRABLE CRICHTON!”

formed of thy merits was my honour and advantage; and now that thou art no more, my grief is immeasurable. Would to God thou wert yet alive, and that this fatal land (though the native country of Virgil) had never possessed thee! For such has been our wretched destiny, that the same land which to him gave birth, should in this latter year deprive thee of life (*alas, in thy twenty second year, a span of existence, though sufficient for thy glory, yet too short for us*). For ever shall I revere thy memory! For ever shall thy image be present to my eyes! To me thou wilt ever be the same, ever cherished in my heart, as in the affections of all worthy men! God grant that thy lot above may be the consummation of heavenly felicity, as on earth thou wert ever attached to what was of heavenly origin, and ever employed in the contemplation of such objects. *O melancholy day, the third of July!* This to thee I write, from this melancholy sojourn on earth, to that heavenly

habitation, with my earnest prayer for every blessing to thy spirit !”*

The date of this affectionate tribute is the 4th of November, 1583: it is prefixed to the Aldine edition of *Cicero de Universitate*. I mention these circumstances because they are important to the consideration of two inedited poems of Crichton, which have fallen into my hands, to which I shall now proceed.

I do not know how I can better introduce the subject than in the words of Mr. Tytler. “Serassi,” says this gentleman,† “an author of high character for accuracy, asserts that he has amongst his miscellanies an Epicedion, written on the death of the Cardinal and Saint, Charles Borromeo, by James Crichton,

* This translation appears in Dr. Black’s *Life of Tasso*. It was furnished by the late Lord Woodhouselee.

† *Life of Crichton*, pp. 211-12-13, Second edition.

a Scotsman, and printed the very day after his death. Serassi copies the title of this Epicedion verbatim, and evidently must have had it before him when he wrote the passage. All supposition of mistake upon his part is thus nearly precluded. The coincidence of the two names, *Jacobus Critonius*, the additional appellation *Scotus*, and the circumstance, that the elegy was written, printed and published the day after the death of the Cardinal, fixes the poem upon James Crichton of Cluny; as the improbability of the supposition that there should have been another Scotsman of the name of James Crichton in Italy, in the year 1584, possessed of the same remarkable facility in poetical composition, is quite apparent. And lastly the subject on which this elegy was composed, renders any error almost impossible. Had it been a poem on any indifferent subject, or a prose work

relating to any disputed point in physics or in morals, we might have been allowed to conjecture that the date 1584 was erroneous; but the death of the Cardinal Charles Borromeo fixes us down to a certain time. An Epicedion on this venerable character could not have been written anterior to the year 1584. On the one hand, therefore, we have Aldus, Imperialis, and all his succeeding biographers, fixing the death of Crichton to the year 1582 or 1583; on the other hand, we have it asserted, that the Admirable Crichton, on the 4th of November, 1584, composed an Epicedion on the Cardinal Borromeo. On which side the truth lies must be left for future writers to discern."

To this I answer by producing the Epicedion in question.

EPICEDIUM ILLUSTRISSIMI ET REVERENDISSIMI CARDINALIS CAROLI BOROMÆI, AB IACOBO CRITONIO SCOTO, ROGATU CLARISSIMI, SUMMAQUE IN OPTIMUM PASTOREM SUUM PIETATE, VIRI, IOANNIS ANTONII MAGII MEDIOLANEN. PROXIMO POST OBITUM DIE EXARATUM. DE CONSENSU SUPERIORUM. [MEDIOLANI. EX TYPOGRAPHIA PACIFICI PONTIJ. M. D. LXXXIIII.]

HEU pullâ clamyde, et scissis Elegia capillis
 Prodeat, et calamos Egloga nacta nigros.
 Nox erat, et mœstas agitabam pectore curas,
 Horaque me noctis tertia vexat atrox.
 Nulla datur requies; sed mens insana vagatur
 Semper, et objectis horret imaginibus.
 Ast tandem sero declinant lumina somno,
 Et (dolor) obrepunt somnia dira mihi.
 Namque fretum ingressus portu prodire videbar,
 Quique ratem regeret Navita nullus erat.
 Hic Ephyre, Drymo, Cydippe, Glaucia, Doris,
 Xanthia, Cymodoce, Lysis et Opis erant.
 Hæc velut in gyrum duplicato poplite fertur,
 Remigat hæc pedibus, nec resupina jacet.
 Intonat horrisono Cælum se murmure miscens,
 Hinc Notus, hinc Boreas, Africus inde ruunt.

Involuere diem nubes, cæcæque tenebræ
 Insurgunt, et nox ingruit atra salo.
 Deficit eximio spoliata carina Magistro,
 Atque procellosis ingemit icta notis.
 Extimui, steteruntque comæ, et timor occupat artus,
 Proh dolor, en veris somnia mixta noto.
 Pro stupor, Arctois peregrinus Scotus ab oris,
 Nauclerum Latii defleo jure pium.
 Flete Viri, lugete senes, discindite vultus
 O pueri, heu juvenes imbre rigate genas.
 Stridulus emissis certatim ululatibus æther
 Horreat, et finem non habeant gemitus.
 Quales cum Troiæ jam tum Fortuna labaret,
 Iliades scisso crine dedere Nurus.
 Ne mea suspensum teneant te metra, benigne
 Lector, Christigenæ Navita, puppis hic est.
 CAROLUS Insubri BOROMÆUS sanguine cretus,
 Cui virtus claro stemmate major erat.
 CAROLUS æterno BOROMÆUS Numine fultus,
 Ut miseræ gentis dux foret ille suæ.
 Non prece, non pretio, non vi sed cœlitus alium,
 Illius textit purpura sacra caput.
 Mentemque perpetuâ Christum spectabat IESVM,
 Purpureos inter gloria summa Patres.
 Non aliter quàm vel radiis solaribus æther
 Cynthia vel bigis nox taciturna suis.

Scilicet Insubres vitiorum mole ruentes,
 Erexit præsul dexteritate pius.
Erectosque manu validâ fulcivit Ephebus,
 Contudit et sacra Relligione scelus.
Hunc Deus elegit solidæ pietatis alumnum,
 Ut magnus patriæ splendor ubique foret.
Sæpiùs ille homines mediâ de morte recepit,
 Quum pestis latè serperet atra Lues.
Ille Dei classem remis, velisque carentem
 Instituit medio fortius ire freto.
Et licet extinctus sit corpore nomine vivit,
 Cujus fama nitens pulsat utrumque polum.
In quo Virtutes fixere sedilia cunctæ,
 De vitiisque ferunt alta trophæa Deo.
Integritas animi, placidoque modestia vultu,
 Et nullis probitas contemerata malis.
Despectusque sui, legis respectus avitæ,
 Providus, et casto plenus amore timor.
Factis culta fides, non solis fumea verbis,
 Sed supero accensas quæ dat ab igne faces.
Aures nobilibus mites præbebat ; egenis
 Consuluit pariter nobilis ille parens.
Ergo non alio fas est hunc nomine dici,
 Quàm sua, quo, pietas nota sit, atque fides.
Sic virtute sua clarus, nec carmine nostro,
 Laude nec alterius clarior esse potest.

Haud equidem varios cristallina globa colores
 Tot dabit, hïc morum quot simulachra nitent.
 Et tamen (o Pietas) vitales exuit auras,
 Et cœli proprias itque reditque vias.
 Eheu nil valuit fugientem sistere vitam,
 Ah nil morte homini certius esse patet.
 Illa malis requiem, metamque laboribus affert,
 Omniaque alternas constat habere vices,
 Sic pluvialis hyems, Zephyro spirante recedit,
 Sic pia nauclerus præmia vester habet.
 Admonet ecce Deus, Deus æthere missus ab alto,
 Currat ut in portus tuta carina suos.
 Intereà Præsul visit pia fana Varallæ,
 Ut præsagus olor fata subire parans.
 Sanctè, quem dederat, cursum Natura peregit,
 Molliter ossa cubant, spiritus astra colit.
 Quem nunc felicem, terris pelagoque relictis,
 Fatidico cecinit Delphicus ore Deus.*

* A free translation of this Elegy will be found in the third volume of the present work. A copy alluded to by M. Eyriès (the writer of the article on Crichton in the *Biog. Universelle*) is preserved in the Bibliothèque du Roi at Paris, of which I have procured a transcript, agreeing in all respects with another impression obtained from Milan. The work is extremely scarce. But I am surprised that Mr. Fraser Tytler, whose enthusiastic zeal in behalf of his distinguished countryman (scarcely surpassed

The authenticity of this poem cannot for an instant be disputed. It bears the strongest internal evidence of emanating from the same mind that conceived the *Appulsus ad Venetam*; and the *vexata quæstio* so long agitated, as to Crichton's having survived the perilous Nones of July may be now considered finally settled. As an extemporaneous effusion (and its author *twice* intimates that it is to be so esteemed), it must be allowed to be a remarkable production. Its versification is singularly fluent and harmonious; and it breathes a spirit of tender melancholy perfectly in unison with the subject. It was dashed off at a heat, at the request of a friend, with its writer's characteristic rapidity; and, if we should fail to discover passages of such transcendent

by that of Aldus Manutius, for his friend), has led him to make researches in every quarter, should have failed to meet with it.

beauty as might be expected from a genius of an order so high as that of Crichton, we must bear in mind the disadvantageous circumstances under which, in all probability, it was composed. The grief of the youthful Scot was, I am persuaded, no poetic fiction. Be this as it may, his reputation will suffer no diminution from the connection of this Epicedion with his name.

Famigeras iterum Critonius exit in auras

Et volat ingenio docta per ora virtūm.

OTINUS.

Not only, however, was Crichton alive in November, 1584—not only on the death of the divine Borromeo did he pour forth his elegiac strains; but in the succeeding month we have further proof of his existence and unabated poetical powers in the following congratulatory address, with which he celebrated the induction of Gaspar Visconti to the archiepiscopal see of Milan.

JACOBI CRITONII SCOTI AD AMPLISSIMUM AC REVERENDISSIMUM VIRUM GASPAREM VICECOMITEM * SUMMA OMNIUM ORDINUM VOLUNTATE, AD PRÆCLARAM ARCHIEPISCOPATUS MEDIOLANEN. ADMINISTRATIONEM, DELECTUM.

GRATULATIO.†

PRIMUS in Exequiis ferali carmine Scotus

Pastoris dolui funera mœsta pii.

Funera mœsta pii BOROMÆI Præsulis ah ah,

Deplanxit tristi nostra Thalia stylo.

Aspice post nimbos, nitidum quàm sæpe reducat

Vectus Lucifero Cynthus axe, diem.

Namque salo pridem Navis spoliata Magistro,

More poetarum, fluctibus obruitur.

Sæviti hyems, venti ingeminant striduntque rudentes,

Sollicitoque tremunt corda pavore virum.

* Gaspar Visconti, a prelate eminent for his learning and piety (though thrown into the shade by the superior sanctity of his immediate precursor and successor, Saint Charles, and Frederick Borromeo) was appointed to the archbishoprick of Milan, on the 29th of November, and consecrated during the ides of December 1584 (*vide Saxii Series Archiepisc. Mil. Tom. III*) the period when Crichton's congratulatory poem was published. A translation of this address will be found in the third volume.

† MEDIOLANI. *Ex Typographia Pacifici Pontii,*
M. D.LXXXIII.

Nec spes ulla fuit melior, quin deficit omnis
 Naucleri posito, turba, magisterio.
 Nec quicquam nisi vota facit divosque deasque
 Orat, ut afflictis rebus adesse velint.
 Tanta sed æterni fuerit clementia Patris
 Ut non humanas deseruisset opes.
 Sic pelagi tandem compescuit Æolus æstus,
 Atque reluctantes traxit in antra Notos.
 Et caput exeruit formosior æquore Titan,
 Illuxit votis mille petita dies.
 Ecce velut fulgur media quod nocte coruscat,
 Alter adest præstans navita puppis, Iö.
 Cujus opes magnas, virtus et gloria longè
 Exuperant, hujus non levis urbis honor.
 Rostra Rotæ,* Romæ, rectâ ratione rotabat,
 Rimantique ratem religione reget.
 Colloquio præsens præsentem denique novi,
 Sensibus injecit qui pia vincla meis.
 Præsule ter felix o nunc Insubria tali,
 Inclyta cui virtus cernitur esse parens.

* The well-known papal court called the *Rota*. Gaspar Visconti was one of the twelve judges, as we learn from *Saxius*, who says that he proceeded to Rome—*ut una cum auditoribus quos vocant ROTÆ ROMANÆ in eo insigni sapientium collegio consideret*. The reader will admire the singular alliterative splendour of this couplet.

Quem propriis ultrò tendentem laudibus, omnes
 Hoc norunt sacrum promeruisse jubar.
 Currite jam cives, dignis ornate lapillis,
 Nobile, facundum, conspicuumque caput.
 Exoptatus ades patriæ rectorque paterque
 GASPAR præsignis nomine reque Comes.
 Quid potuit mœstæ contingere lætius Urbi?
 Qui suavi pascas pectora nostra cibo.
 Participes hujus concurrunt undique gentes
 Lætitiæ, et cura est omnibus una tui,
 Deponunt luctus, et te succedere gaudent,
 Nam cui succedis non latet orbe viros.
 Illum Sarmaticus Boreas, et Caucasus asper
 Protulerit, Charites qui neget ore tuas.
 Magnanimum sydus, tu gloria splendor avorum,
 Tu generis columen, portus et aura tui.
 Integritas morum, pietas, facundia, virtus,
 Musa, tibi probitas, dexteritasque placent.
 Relligione Numam, antiquum gravitate Catonem,
 Augustum illustrem nobilitate refers.
 Hinc te GREGORIUS, summi qui Numinis instar,
 Clavigerâ, reserat regna beata, manu.
 Eximio magnus donavit munere Pastor,
 Ut tegat emeritas sacra Tiara comas.
 Auguriis sibi quisque animum felicibus implet,
 Exoptat longos, et tibi quisque dies.

CRITONIUS Scotis Arctoæ in finibus oræ
 Progenitus, GASPARE, gratulor ecce tibi,
 Sis felix, carmenque meum lege fronte serenâ,
 Gaudebit, Præsul, Musa favore tuo.

CIO IO XXCIV. V. Idus Decembris.

Unnoticed by, and evidently unknown to all his former biographers, this congratulatory poem closes the intellectual career of the Admirable Crichton.* All beyond is wrapped in obscurity. Whether a clue to the mystery in which his future fate is involved, has been found in the following narrative remains to be seen. I shall not here anticipate.

To the consideration of the present and the preceding performance should be brought a

Any further information respecting Crichton will probably be derived from the voluminous manuscript letters of San Carlos Borromeo, preserved in the Ambrosian Library at Milan;—from the letters of Sperone Speroni, in the edition of Forcellini, which have not come under my observation;—or from some contemporary memoir, or correspondence published at Mantua.

knowledge of Crichton's strong devotion to the Church of Rome; to that ancient faith—shorn of its glory in his own land, for which, after encountering those unhappy differences adverted to by Aldus (*prælia domestica contra te suscitata quæ cum patre gessisti*) and rejecting the brilliant offers held out to him by the leaders of the popular faith, whose cause and opinions his family had embraced, he had so long absented himself from his country, his friends, his home.*

Attached to the church of Rome, he was necessarily attached to her priesthood. Milan, under the sway of the divine Borromeo, became the model of Ecclesiastical jurisdiction. To Milan Crichton repaired. His grief for the loss of the exalted primate was

* *Quod scilicet regno, patria, domoque, ob Catholicæ fidei ardorem, tam longe abes.*—Aldi Dedicatio in Parodoxa Ciceronis.

deep and heart-felt; his rejoicing at the appointment of his successor, whose piety he himself, as he informs us, had approved—

Whose power in exhortation shown,
Whose wisdom, I myself have known,
When by his eloquence subdued,
In admiration lost, I stood :—

was unfeigned :—and if the verses just quoted do nothing more, they at least prove, that the adherence to the faith of his ancestry, which sent him forth a wanderer from their heresy-girt halls, was still unchanged.

Efforts have been made on the part of some recent writers to shake the celebrity of the Admirable Scot, by assailing the few poetical pieces which he has left us, and by measuring the grasp of his intellect by this unfair standard. This is to judge of the fire of Sappho by her twin odes; of the comic humour of Menander by his fragments. The

prejudices of the learned biographer of Tasso must indeed be blinding if he can see no beauties in the *Appulsus*, no inspiration, no poetic verve, no classic taste and feeling in the odes to Massa and Donatus. It is not, however, from what remains to us of his writings—but from the effect produced upon his contemporaries, (and *such* contemporaries), that we can form a just estimate of the extent of Crichton's powers. By them he was esteemed a miracle of learning—*divinum plane juvenem*: and we have an instance in our own times of a great poet and philosopher, whose published works scarcely bear out the high reputation he enjoyed for colloquial ability. The idolized friend of Aldus Manutius, of Lorenzo Massa, Giovanni Donati, and Sperone Speroni, amongst the most accomplished scholars of their age; the antagonist of the redoubted Arcangelus Mercena-

rius and Giacomo Mazzoni, (whose memory was so remarkable that he could recite entire books of Dante, Ariosto, Virgil and Lucretius, and who had sounded all the depths of philosophy)—could not have been other than an extraordinary person; and we may come to the conclusion respecting him, arrived at by Dr. Johnson, that “whatever we may suppress as surpassing credibility, yet we shall, upon incontestible authority, relate enough to rank him among prodigies.” Accordingly we recommend Dr. Black to make his palinode without delay.

Crichton, I take it, was something between *le beau* D’Orsay, and the learned priest of Water-grass-hill of our own times—combining the grace and wit of the one, with the scholarship, and readiness in its display, of the other; or, perhaps, a nearer approach to his universal attainments might be found in the

person of his distinguished countryman—Professor Wilson—the modern Admirable Scot!

There is a passage in David Buchanan's memorial of Crichton, in which, alluding to the deadly enmity borne towards him by Vincenzo di Gonzaga, he assigns as the cause—" *quod amasiam principis deperiret.*" This passage may be regarded as the text of the narrative of Sir Thomas Urquhart, and of the following story. To a certain extent I have pursued the course taken by the never-sufficiently-to-be-admired Knight of Cromarty, whose ΕΚΣΚΥΒΑΛΥΤΟΝ is indeed a jewel of a book. His descriptions of the masque, and duel at Mantua are inimitable. So thoroughly was this singular writer imbued with the spirit of Rabelais (of whom he has left an unfinished, but so far as it goes most exquisite translation*), that in his account of the

* Why, may we enquire, have the Maitland Club in their

disputation in the college of Navarre, he seems to have unconsciously imitated Panurge's controversy with Thaumast the Englishman, while in the "true pedigree and lineal descent of the ancient and honourable family of Urquhart," he appears anxious to emulate the mighty genealogical honours of the good Pantagrue. Sir Thomas, however, is a joyous spirit—a right Pantagrueist; and if occasionally—

Projicit ampullas et sesquipedalia verba,

he has an exuberance of wit and playfulness of fancy that amply redeems his tendency to fanfarronade. *Sed ad rem redeamus.* In my endeavour to illustrate the various shades of Crichton's many-coloured character I have, perhaps, touched too lightly on its scholastic

recent beautiful reprint of Urquhart's works omitted this translation, the best of them?

features. But I felt, that adequately to exhibit one of those scenes of intellectual digladiation, in which he was so frequently and so triumphantly engaged, would require the possession of a depth of learning little inferior to that of the invincible disputant himself. I have, accordingly, elected as the safer, and, indeed, more suitable course to portray him as the *preux chevalier* and all-accomplished gallant, rather than the philosopher and dialectician. Any deficiency in my sketch will be abundantly supplied by a history of the Schools and Schoolmen of the Sixteenth Century, with full details of their syllogistic and logical encounters*—

—— their natures and abstracts,
Where quiddity and entity
The ghosts of defunct bodies fly ;

* Dr. Black, who has examined the *Dilucidations* of Arcangelus Mercenarius, which he supposes may have been the "text book" of the disputes between this sounding-

to be found, if I mistake not, in the inexhaustible “ chest ” of my erudite friend, Father Prout—from which so many valuable additions to our learned literature have been already extracted.

In allusion to the *folles amours* of Crichton, as here recorded, I shall take leave to say a few words. “ It is at all times,” observes Mr. Forster, the able biographer of Strafford,* “ a delicate matter to touch

named philosopher and Crichton, gives the following, as the title of one of his dissertations:—“ *In prima forma essentia ejus est quiditas ejus, in aliis verò essentia à quiditate quoquomodo diversa est.*” He subjoins also another proposition, as ludicrous, if not as unintelligible, as Buridan’s famous sophism of the *pons asinorum*. The question to be perpended, which may pass for a conundrum, is, “ *Whether an old man, if he had a young man’s eye, could see as a young man ?*”

* In the *Lives of Eliot and Strafford—Lardner’s Cabinet Cyclopædia—Biographical Series*. Great things have been achieved by this youthful historian. But still greater may be expected from him. His portraiture of Strafford is a masterly performance. The sterner lineaments of Sir John Eliot are severely and faithfully presented, but appear by the side of their companion, from a certain coldness in

upon this portion of men's histories, partly from the nature of the subject, and partly from a kind of soreness which the community feel upon it, owing to the inconsistencies between their opinions and practices, and to certain strange perplexities at the heart of those inconsistencies which it remains for some bolder and more philosophical generation even to discuss." Without pausing to examine this nice question, it may be suffi-

the colouring, like a painting of Holbein, next to one by Vandyke. But there is no mistaking the truth of the likeness. Mr. Forster is a subtle analyser of character—a profound and philosophical thinker, and will take nothing for granted. His style is eloquent, energetic and convincing. It is a high privilege to enjoy the friendship of one whose name will be, hereafter, an earnest of some remembrance by posterity. This privilege I can boast; and may assert with Charles Nodier, who, speaking of his friend Dumas, thus puts forth his claim to immortality,—*La Fontaine avait un ami qui s'appelait Gâche, Rousseau un ami qui s'appelait Bâche, et Voltaire un ami qui s'appelait Thiriot, si Voltaire avait un ami. Gâche, Bâche et Thiriot ne mourront jamais dans la mémoire des hommes, ni moi non plus : je suis l'ami de FORSTER.*

cient to plead the apology of the historian for the introduction of a topic necessary to the due consideration of the character about to be depicted. Boccacini's satiric sketch; Sir Thomas Urquhart's narrative,* and other allusions of more accredited biographers would justify me in giving Crichton an air of gallantry, were it possible to con-

* All this while the Admirable Scot, minding more his hawking, hunting, tilting, vaulting, riding of well-managed horses, tossing of the pike, handling of the musquet, flourishing of colours, dancing, fencing, swimming, jumping, throwing of the bar, playing at the tennis, baloon, or long-catch; and sometimes at the house games of dice, cards, playing at the chess, billiards, trou-madam, and other such like chamber sports, singing, playing on the lute, and other musical instruments, masking, balling, revelling, *and which did most of all divert, or rather distract him from his speculations, and serious employments, being more addicted to, and plying closer the company of handsome ludyes, and a jovial cup in the company of Bacchanalian blades, than the fore-casting how to avoid, shun, and escape the snares, gins, and nets of the hard, obscure, and hidden arguments, riddles and demands, to be made, framed, and woven by the professors, doctors, and others of the thrice-renowned University of Paris.* — SIR THOMAS URQUHART.—*Discovery of a Jewel.*

ceive, that he who surpassed all the aspiring spirits of the age in which he flourished, in the feats of arts and arms, (and whose aim was to excel in every thing) could be behind them in their excesses, especially when those very excesses tended to advance his reputation. The manners of the time were corrupt in the extreme; and the fascinations of the *belles et honnêtes dames et demoiselles* of the Court of Catherine de Medicis were such as required more stoicism to withstand, than the handsome Scot cared to practise. The reader may, if he chooses, speedily gather a notion of the universal profligacy of the period from the *bons contes* of Brantôme, and the different memoirs included in the Journal of Henri III.

What I have advanced respecting Marguerite de Valois is fully borne out by the

Divorce Satirique, and the details of Scipio Dupleix. The majestic and terrible figure of Catherine de Medicis is too deeply impressed upon the page of history to make it necessary to advert to the sources whence I have transferred its lineaments to my canvass.

It only now remains to speak of Vincenzo di Gonzaga, whose cause has been warmly, but unsuccessfully advocated by Dr. Black. Notwithstanding his patronage of men of letters (extended towards them, as much from ostentation as any other motive, by the various Italian rulers of the time), this prince was, we learn, from Muratori, exceedingly luxurious and profuse in his habits—" *gran giocatore, grande scialacquator dal danaro, sempre involto fra il lusso, e gli amori, sempre in lieti passatempi o di festi, o di balli, o di musiche, o di commedie.*" Sismondi, who has given an excellent summary of his character,

says—“ *il aimait avec passion les femmes, le jeu, la danse, le theatre.*” And Possevino, the annalist (and, therefore, the panegyrist) of his family, expressly alludes to his vindictive disposition — “ *quidam vindictæ nimium, ideòque in abrupta tractum opinantur.*” For the rest I may affirm with Victor Hugo—“ *que souvent les fables du peuple font la vérité du poete.*”

But it is high time to bring this (I have reason to fear) wearisome prologue to a close. Hold me excused, dear reader, if I have detained you too long by the way—“ *perdonate mi,*” as jolly old Rabelais saith, “ and think not so much upon my faults that you forget your own.”

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CRICHTON.

Epoch the First.

P A R I S.

February 17.

1579.

EN celuy an vint un jeune homme qui n'avoit que vingt ans ou environ, qui sçavoit tous les sept arts liberaux ; par le tesmoignage de tous les Clercs de l'Université de Paris, et si sçavoit jouer de tous les instruments, chanter et deschanter mieux que nul autre. Item, en faict de guerre, nul plus expert, et jouoit de l'épée à deux mains si merueilleusement, que nul ne s'y comparast ; car, quand il voyoit son ennemy, il nefailloit point à saillir sur luy vingt, ou vingt quatre pieds à un sault. Item, il est Maistre en Arts, Maistre en Medecine, Docteur en Loix, Docteur en Decret, Docteur en Theologie : et vraiment il a disputé a nous au College de Navarre, qui estions plus de cinquante des plus parfaicts Clercs de l'Université de Paris, et plus de trois milles autres Clercs, et a si hautement respondu à toutes les questions qu'on luy a faictes, que c'est une droicte merveille à croire qui ne l'auroit veu.—

RECHERCHES DE PASQUIER.

Histoire d'un jeune homme de prodigieux esprit.

THE FIRST DAY.

CHAPTER I.

THE SCHOLARS.

Tu viens doncques de Paris? dist Pantagruel—Et à quoy passez vous les temps, vous aultres Messieurs Estudians au dict Paris?—RABELAIS.—*Pantagruel.*—*Liv. II. Chap. vi.*

TOWARDS the close of Wednesday, the 4th of February, 1579, a vast assemblage of scholars was collected before the gothic gateway of the ancient college of Navarre. So numerous was this concourse, that it not merely blocked up the area in front of this renowned seminary, but extended far down the Rue de la Montagne Saint-Généviève, in which it is situated. Never had such a disorderly rout been brought together since the days of the

uproar in 1557, when the predecessors of these turbulent students took up arms, marched in a body to the Pré-aux-Clercs, set fire to three houses in the vicinity, and slew a serjeant of the guard, who vainly endeavoured to restrain their fury. Their last election of a Rector, Messire Adrian D'Amboise, "*pater eruditionum*," as he is described in his epitaph, when the same body congregated within the cloisters of the Mathurins, and thence proceeded, in tumultuous array, to the Church of Saint-Louis, in the Isle of the same name,—had been nothing to it. Every scholastic hive sent forth its drones. Sorbonne, and Montaigu, Cluni, Harcourt, the Four Nations, and a host of minor establishments—in all, amounting to forty-two — each added its swarms; and a pretty buzzing they created! The fair of Saint-Germain had only commenced the day before; but though its festivities were to continue till Palm Sunday; and though it was the constant resort of the Scholars, who committed, during their days of

carnival, ten thousand excesses,—it was now absolutely deserted.

The Pomme-de-Pin, the Castel, the Magdaleine, and the Mule, those *tabernes meritoires*, celebrated in Pantagruel's conference with the Limosin student, which has conferred upon them an immortality like that of our own hostel, the Mermaid, were wholly neglected; the dice-box was laid aside for the nonce; and the well-used cards were thrust into the doublets of these thirsty tipplers of the Schools.

But not alone did the crowd consist of the brawler, the gambler, the bully, and the debauchee, though these, it must be confessed, predominated. It was a grand medley of all sects and classes. The modest demeanour of the retiring, pale-browed student, was haply contrasted with the ferocious aspect and reckless bearing of his immediate neighbour, whose appearance was little better than that of a bravo. The grave theologian and embryo ecclesiastic were placed in juxta-position with the scoffing, and licentious acolyte;

while the lawyer *in posse*, and the law-breaker *in esse*, were numbered amongst a group, whose pursuits were those of violence and fraud.

Various as were the characters that composed it, not less diversified were the costumes of this heterogeneous assemblage. Subject to no particular regulations as to dress, or rather openly infracting them, if any such were attempted to be enforced,—each scholar, to whatever college he belonged, attired himself in such-wise as best suited his taste, or his finances. Taking it altogether, the mob was neither remarkable for the fashion, nor the cleanliness of the apparel of its members.

From Rabelais we learn that the passion of play was so strongly implanted in the students of his day, that they would frequently stake the points of their doublets at tric-trac or trou-madam ; and but little improvement had taken place in their morals or manners some half century afterwards. The buckle at their girdle—the mantle on their shoulders—the

shirt to their back—often stood the hazard of the die; and hence it not unfrequently happened, that a rusty *pourpoint*, and ragged *chausses* were all the covering which the luckless dicers could enumerate, owing, no doubt, “to the extreme rarity and penury of *pecune* in their *marsupies*.”

Round or square caps, hoods and cloaks of black, gray, or other sombre hue, were, however, the prevalent garb of the members of the University; but here and there might be seen some gayer specimen of the tribe, whose broad-rimmed, high-crowned felt hat, and flaunting feather; whose puffed-out sleeves, and exaggerated ruff—with starched plaits of such amplitude, that they had been not inappropriately named *plats de Saint Jean Baptiste*, from the resemblance which the wearer’s head bore to that of the Saint, when deposited in the charger of the daughter of Herodias, were intended to ape the leading mode of the elegant and dressy court of their sovereign Henri,—third of that name.

To such an extent had these insolents carried their licence of imitation, that certain of their members, fresh from the fair of St. Germain, and not wholly unacquainted with the hippocras of the suttlers crowding its mart, wore around their throats enormous collars of paper, cut in rivalry of the legitimate plaits of muslin, and bore in their hands long hollow sticks, from which they discharged peas and other missiles in imitation of the wand-like sarbacane then in vogue with the monarch and his favorites.

Thus fantastically tricked out, on that same day—nay, only a few hours before, and at the fair we have mentioned, had these facetious wights, with more of merriment than discretion, ventured to exhibit themselves before the *cortège* of Henri, and to exclaim loud enough to reach the ears of royalty, “*à la fraize on connôit le veau!*”—a piece of pleasantry for which they subsequently paid dear.

Notwithstanding its shabby appearance in detail, the general effect of this scholastic

rabble was striking and picturesque. The thick moustaches and clipped and pointed beards with which the lips and chins of most of them were decorated, gave to their physiognomies a manly and determined air, fully borne out by their unrestrained carriage and deportment.

To a man, almost all were armed with a tough vine-wood bludgeon, called in their language, the *estoc volant*, tipped and shod with steel; a weapon fully understood by them, and rendered, by their dexterity in the use of it, formidable to their adversaries. Not a few carried at their girdles the short rapier, so celebrated in their duels and brawls, or concealed within their bosom a poignard or two-edged knife.

The Scholars of Paris have ever been a turbulent and ungovernable race; and at the period of which this narrative treats, and, indeed, long antecedently, were little better than a licensed horde of robbers, consisting of a pack of idle and wayward youth drafted

from all parts of Europe, as well as from the remoter provinces of their own nation. There was little in common between the mass of students and their brethren excepting the fellowship resulting from the universal licence in which all indulged. Hence their thousand combats amongst themselves—combats almost invariably attended with fatal consequences—and which the heads of the University found it impossible to check.

Their own scanty resources, eked out by what little they could derive from beggary or robbery, formed their chief subsistence; for many of them were positive mendicants, and were so denominated; and, being possessed of a sanctuary within their own quarters, to which they could at convenience retire, they submitted to the constraint of no laws, except those enforced within the jurisdiction of the University, and hesitated at no means of enriching themselves at the expense of their neighbours. Hence, the frequent warfare waged between them and the monks of St.

Germain des Prés, whose monastic domains adjoined their territories, and whose meadows were the constant *champ clos* of their skirmishes; according to Dulaure—*presque toujours un théâtre de tumulte, de galanterie, de combats, de duels, de débauches, et de sédition.* Hence their sanguinary conflicts with the good citizens of Paris, to whom they were wholly obnoxious, and who occasionally repaid their aggressions with interest.

In 1407, two of their number, convicted of assassination and robbery, were condemned to the gibbet, and the sentence was carried into execution, but so great was the uproar occasioned in the University by this violation of its immunities, that the Provost of Paris, Guillaume de Tignonville, was compelled to take down their bodies from Montfaucon, and see them honourably and ceremoniously interred. This recognition of their rights only served to make matters worse, and for a series of years the nuisance continued unabated.

It is not our purpose to record all the excesses of the University, nor the means taken for their suppression. Vainly were the civil authorities arrayed against them—vainly were bulls thundered from the Vatican—no amendment was effected. The weed might be cut down, but was never entirely extirpated. Their feuds were transmitted from generation to generation, and their old bone of contention with the Abbot of St. Germain (the Pré-aux-Clercs) was, after an uninterrupted strife for thirty years, submitted to the arbitration of the Pope, who very equitably refused to pronounce judgment in favour of either party.

Such were the Scholars of Paris in the sixteenth century;—such the character of the clamorous crew who besieged the portals of the College of Navarre.

The object which summoned together this unruly multitude was, it appears, a desire on the part of the Scholars to be present at a public controversy, or learned disputation, then occurring within the great hall of the

College, before which they were congregated ; and the disappointment caused by their finding the gates closed, and all entrance denied to them, occasioned their present disposition to riot.

It was in vain they were assured by the halberdiers stationed at the gates, and who, with their crossed pikes, strove to resist the onward pressure of the mob, that the hall and court were already crammed to overflowing—that there was not room even for the sole of a foot of a Doctor of the Faculties, and that their orders were positive and imperative that none beneath the degree of a Bachelor or Licentiate should be admitted, and that a troop of Martinets* and Béjaunes† could have no possible claim to admission.

In vain they were told this was no ordinary disputation, no common controversy, that all

* Scholars either not living within the walls of the University, or not being *en pension* at the Colleges.

† Yellow-beaks ; a nickname applied to newly-admitted students.

were alike entitled to licence of ingress, that the disputant was no undistinguished scholar, whose renown did not extend beyond his own trifling sphere, and whose opinions, therefore, few would care to hear, and still fewer to oppugn, but a foreigner of high rank, in high favour and fashion, and not more remarkable for his extraordinary intellectual endowments, than for his brilliant personal accomplishments.

In vain the trembling officials sought to clinch their arguments by stating, that not alone did the conclave consist of the chief members of the University, the senior Doctors of Theology, Medicine, and Law, the Professors of the Humanities, Rhetoric, and Philosophy, and all the various other dignitaries; but that the debate was honoured by the presence of Monsieur Christophe de Thou, first President of Parliament; by that of the learned Jacques Augustin, of the same name; by one of the Secretaries of State and Governor of Paris, M. René

de Villequier ; by the Ambassadors of Elizabeth of England ; and of Philip II. of Spain, and several of their suite ; by Pierre de Bourdeille, Abbé de Brantome ; by M. Miron, Physician to his most Christian Majesty, Henry III. ; by Cosmo Ruggieri, chief astrologer to the Queen Mother, Catherine de Medicis ; by the renowned poets and masque writers, Maitres Ronsard, Baif, and Philippe Desportes ; by the well-known advocate of parliament, Messire Etienne Pasquier ; but, also, (and here came the *gravamen* of the objection to their admission) by the two especial favourites of his majesty and leaders of affairs, the lords of Joyeuse and D'Épernon.

It was in vain the Students were informed that, for the preservation of strict decorum, they had been commanded by the Rector to make fast the gates. No excuses would avail them. The Scholars were cogent reasoners, and a shew of staves soon brought their opponents to a nonplus. In this line of argument

they were perfectly aware of their ability to prove a *major*.

“ To the wall with them—to the wall!” cried a hundred infuriated voices. “ Down with the halberdiers—down with the gates—down with the disputants—down with the Rector himself!—deny our privileges! To the wall with Messire Adrian D’Amboise—exclude the disciples of the University from their own halls!—curry favour with the court minions!—hold a public controversy in private!—down with him—we will issue a *mandamus* for a new election on the spot!”

Whereupon a deep groan resounded throughout the crowd, and was succeeded by a volley of fresh execrations against the Rector, and an angry demonstration of their bludgeons, accompanied by a brisk shower of peas from the sarbacanes.

The officials turned pale, and calculated the chance of a broken neck in reversion, with that of a broken crown in immediate possession. The former being at least con-

tingent, appeared the milder alternative, and they might have been inclined to adopt it, had not a further obstacle stood in their way. The gate was barred withinside, and the vergers and bedels who had the custody of the door, though alarmed at the tumult without, positively refused to unfasten it.

Again, the threats of the Scholars were renewed, and further intimations of violence were exhibited,—again the peas rattled upon the hands and faces of the halberdiers, till their ears tingled with pain and rage.

“ Prate to us of the King’s favorites,” cried one of the foremost of their ranks, a youth decorated with a paper collar, as before-mentioned; “ they may rule within the precincts of the Louvre, but not within the walls of the University. Maugrebleu! We hold them cheap enough. We heed not the idle bark of these full-fed court lap-dogs.—What to us is the bearer of a bilboquet? By the Four Evangelists we will have none of them here! Let the little cadet of Gascony,

D'Épernon, reflect on the fate of Quélus and Maugiron, and let our gay Joyeuse beware of the dog's death of Saint Mégrin. Place for better men—place for the Schools—away with frills and sarbacanes!”

“What to us is a President of Parliament, or a governor of the city?” shouted another of the same gentry. “We care nothing for their ministration; we recognize them not, save in their own courts; all their authority fell to the ground at the gate of the Rue St. Jacques, when they entered our dominions. We care for no parties; we are *politiques*, and steer a middle course; we hold the Guisards as cheap as the Hugonots, and the brethren of the League weigh as little with us as the followers of Calvin. Our only Sovereign is Gregory XIII., Pontiff of Rome; away with the Guise and the Béarnais!”

“Away with Henri of Navarre, if you please,” cried a man of Harcourt; “or Henri of Valois, if you list, but by all the Saints not with Henri of Lorraine, he is the fast friend

of the true faith. No!—no!—live the Guise—live the Holy Union!”

“ Away with Elizabeth of England,” cried a scholar of Cluni; “ what doth her representative here? Seeks he a spouse for her amongst our schools? She will have no great bargain, I own, if she bestows her royal hand upon our Duc D’Anjou.”

“ If you value your buff jerkin, I counsel you to say nothing slighting of Elizabeth of England in my hearing,” returned an Englishman of the Four Nations, bluff as the huge bull-dog at his heels, and raising his bludgeon after a menacing fashion.

“ Away with Philip of Spain and his Ambassador,” cried a Bernardin.

“ Por los ojos de mi Dama!” cried a Spaniard belonging to the College of Narbonne, with huge moustaches curled half way up his bronzed and insolent visage, and a slouched hat bent fiercely over his brow. This may not pass muster. The representative of his Majesty Dom Philip must be respected even

by the Academics of Lutetia. Which of you shall gainsay me?—ha!”

“What business has he here with his suite, on occasions like to the present?” returned the Bernardin; “Tête-Dieu! this disputation is one which little concerns the interest of your politic King; and methinks Dom Philip or his representative has regard for little else than whatsoever may advance his own interest. Your Ambassador hath, I doubt not, some latent motive for his present attendance in our schools.”

“May be;” returned the Spaniard. “We will discuss that point anon.”

“And what doth the pander of the Sybarite within the dusty halls of learning?” ejaculated a scholar of Lemoine. “What doth the jealous-pated slayer of his wife and unborn child within the reach of free-spoken voices, and mayhap of well-directed blades. Methinks it were more prudent to have tarried within the bowers of his harem, than to hazard his perfumed

person amongst those whose contact may be ruder than he is wont to encounter."

"Well said," rejoined the scholar of Cluni—"down with René de Villequier—down with the cuckoldy knave, though he be Governor of Paris."

"What title hath the Seigneur Abbé de Brantôme to a seat amongst us?" said the scion of Harcourt; "certes he hath a reputation for wit, and scholarship, and gallantry. But what is that to us? His place might now be filled by worthier men."

"And what, in the devil's name, brings Cosmo Ruggieri hither?" asked the Bernardin. "What doth the wrinkled old dealer in the black art hope to learn from us? We are not given to alchemy, and the occult sciences; we practise no hidden mysteries; we brew no philtres; we compound no slow poisons; we vend no waxen images. What doth he here, I say? 'Tis a scandal in the Rector to permit his presence. And what if he came under the safeguard, and by the authority of

his mistress, Catherine de Medicis, shall we regard her passport? Down with the heathen Abbé; his abominations have been endured too long; they smell rank in our nostrils. Think how he ensnared La Mole—think on his numberless victims. Who mixed the infernal potion of Charles IX.? Let him answer that. Down with the infidel—the Jew—the sorcerer; the stake were too good for him—down with Ruggieri I say.”

“Ay, down with the accursed Astrologer,” echoed the whole crew. “He has done abundant mischief in his time; a day of reckoning has arrived; hath he cast his own horoscope? Did he foresee his own fate? Ha! ha!”

“And then the Poets,” cried another member of the Four Nations—“a plague on all three; would they were elsewhere than where they are. In what does this disputation concern them? Pierre Ronsard being an offshoot of this same College of Navarre hath indubitably

a claim upon her consideration. But he is waxing old, and I marvel that his gout permitted him to hobble so far. Oh, the mercenary old scribbler! His late verses halt like himself, yet he lowereth not the price of his masques. Besides which he is grown moral, and unsays all his former good things. Mort-Dieu! your superannuated bards ever recant the indiscretions of their nonage. Clement Marot took to psalm-writing in his old age. As to Baif, his name will scarce outlast the scenery of his ballets, his plays are out of fashion since the Gelosi arrived; he deserves no place amongst us; and Philip Desportes owes all his present preferment to the Vicomte de Joyeuse; however, he is not altogether devoid of merit—let him wear his bays so he trouble us not with his company. Room for the sophisters of Narbonne I say—to the dogs with Poesy!”

“Morbleu!” exclaimed a Sorbonist, “What are the sophisters of Narbonne to the decretists of the Sorbonne, who will discuss you

a position of Cornelius à Lapede, or a sentence of Peter Lombard as readily as you would a flask of hippocras, or a slice of bôtargo. Ay, and cry *transeat* to a thesis of Aristotle, though it be against rule. What sayst thou, Capète?" continued he, addressing his neighbour, a scholar of Montaignu, whose modest grey capuchin procured him this appellation; "Are we the men to be thus scurvily entreated?"

"I see not that your merits are greater than ours," returned he of the capuch, "though our boasting be less. The followers of the lowly John Standoncht are as well able to maintain their tenets in controversy as those of Robert of Sorbon; and I see no reason why entrance should be denied us. The honour of the University is at stake, and all its strength should be mustered to assert it."

"Rightly spoken," returned the Bernardin, "and it were a lasting disgrace to our Schools were this arrogant Scot to carry off their laurels when so many who might have been

found to lower his crest are allowed no share in their defence. The contest is one which concerns us all alike; we at least can arbitrate in case of need."

"I care not for the honours of the University," rejoined one of the Ecossais, or Scotch College, then existing in the Rue des Aman-diars, "but I care much for the glory of my countryman, and I would gladly have witnessed the triumph of the disciple of Rutherford, and of the classic Buchanan. But if the arbitrament to which you would resort is to be that of *voices* merely, I am glad the Rector in his wisdom has thought fit to keep you without, even though I myself be personally inconvenienced by it."

"Hijo di Dios! what fine talking is this?" retorted the Spaniard. "There is little chance of the triumph you predicate for your countryman. Trust me, we shall have to greet his departure from the debate with many hisses and few cheers; and could we penetrate through the plates of yon iron door and gaze

into the court it conceals from our view, we should find that the loftiness of his pretensions has been already humbled, and his arguments gravelled. Por la Litania de los Santos! to think of comparing an obscure student of the pitiful College of St. Andrew, with the most erudite Doctors of the most erudite University in the world, always excepting those of Valencia and Salamanca. It needs all thy country's assurance to keep the blush of shame from mantling thy cheeks."

"The seminary you revile," replied the Scot haughtily, "has been the nursery of our Scottish Kings; nay, the youthful James Stuart pursued his studies under the same roof, beneath the same wise instruction, and at the self-same time as our noble and gifted Crichton, whom you have falsely denominated an adventurer, but whose learning is not less distinguished than his lineage. His renown has preceded him hither, and he was not unknown to your doctors when he affixed his

programmes to these College walls. Hark!" continued the speaker exultingly, "and listen to yon evidence of his intellectual triumph."

And as he addressed his companions, a loud and continued clapping of hands proceeding from within was distinctly heard above the roar of the Students.

"That may be at his defeat," muttered the Spaniard between his teeth.

"No such thing," replied the Scot. "I heard the name of Crichton mingled with the plaudits."

"Cuerpo di Dios! and who may be this Phoenix—this Gargantua of intellect—who is to vanquish us all as Panurge did Thaumast the Englishman?" asked the Spaniard of the Scot.—"Who is he that is more philosophic than Pythagoras?—ha!"

"Who is more studious than Carneades!"

"More versatile than Alcibiades!"

"More subtle than Averroës!"

"More mystical than Plotinus!"

“ More visionary than Artemidorus !’

“ More infallible than the Pope !”

“ And who pretends to dispute *de omniscibili* !” shouted several in a breath.

“ *Et quolibet ente !*” added others with a laugh.

“ Mine ears are stunned with your vociferations,” replied the Scot. “ You ask me who this Crichton is, and yourselves give the response. You have said he is a *rara avis* ; a prodigy of wit and learning ; and you have avouched no fable. He is so. But I will tell you that of him of which you are wholly ignorant, or which you have designedly overlooked. His condition is that of a Scottish gentleman of exalted rank. Like your Grandees, sir Spaniard, he need not doff his cap to Kings. On either side hath he the best of blood in his veins. His mother was a Stuart directly descended from that regal line. His father, who owneth the fair domains of Eliock and Cluny, was Lord Advocate to our bonny and luckless Mary (whom Heaven assoilzie of her sins

and take beneath its special protection!), and still holds his high office. Methinks the Lords of Crichton might have been heard of here. Howbeit, they are well known to me, who, being an Ogilvy of Balfour, have often heard tell of a certain contract or obligation, whereby——”

“Basta!” interrupted the Spaniard, “heed not thine own affairs, camarada; tell us of this Crichton—ha!”

“I have told you already more than I care to tell,” replied Ogilvy, sullenly, “And if you lack further information respecting his favour at the Louvre, his feats of arms, and the esteem in which he is held by all the dames of honour in attendance upon your Queen Mother Catherine de Medicis—and moreover,” added he, with somewhat of sarcasm, “with her fair daughter Margu rite de Valois—you will do well to address yourself to the King’s buffoon Maitre Chicot, whom I see not far distant from us. Few there are methinks who could in such short space have

won so much favor, or acquired such bright renown."

"Humph!" muttered the Englishman, "your Scotchmen stick by each other all the world over. This Crichton may or may not be the hero he is vaunted, but I shall take leave to mistrust his praises from that quarter, till I find their truth confirmed."

"He has, to be sure, acquired the character of a stout swordsman," said the Bernardin, "to give the devil his due."

"He has not met with his match at the Salle-d'armes, though he has crossed blades with the first in France," replied Ogilvy.

"I have seen him at the Manège," said the Sorbonist, "go through his course of equitation, and being a not altogether unskilful horseman myself; I can report favourably of his performance."

"There is none among your youth can sit a steed like him," returned Ogilvy, "nor can any of the jousts carry off the ring with more certainty at the lists. I would fain

hold my tongue, but you enforce me to speak in his praise."

"Cuerpo di Dios!" exclaimed the Spaniard, half unsheathing the lengthy weapon that hung by his side. "I will hold you a wager of ten rose-nobles to as many silver reals of Spain, that with this staunch Toledo I will overcome your vaunted Crichton in close fight in any manner or practice of fence or digladiation which he may appoint—sword and dagger, or sword only, and stripped to the girdle, or armed to the teeth. Por la santa Trinidad! I will have satisfaction for the contumelious affront he hath put upon the very learned gymnasium to which I belong; and it would gladden me to clip the wings of this loud-crowing cock, or of any of his dunghill crew," added he with a scornful gesture at the Scotsman.

"If that be all you seek, you shall not need to go far in your quest," returned Ogilvy. "Tarry but till this controversy be ended, and if I match not your Spanish blade with a tough

Scottish broadsword, and approve you as recreant at heart as you are boastful and injurious of speech, may St. Andrew for ever after withhold from me his protection."

"Diablo!" exclaimed the Spaniard. "Thy Scottish Saint will little avail thee, since thou hast incurred my indignation. Betake thee, therefore, to thy Paternosters, if thou hast grace withal to mutter them; for within the hour thou art asuredly food for the kites of the Pré-aux-Clercs—sa-ha!"

"Look to thyself, vile braggart!" said Ogilvy scornfully, "I promise thee thou shalt need other intercession than thine own to purchase thee safety at my hands."

"Courage, sir Scot," said the Englishman, "thou wilt do well to slit the ears of this Spanish swash-buckler; I warrant me he hides a craven spirit beneath that slashed pourpoint. Thou art in the right, man, to make him eat his words; be this Crichton what he may, he is at least thy countryman and in part mine own."

“And as such I will uphold him,” said Ogilvy, “against any odds.”

“Bravo! my valorous Dom Diego Caravaja,” said the Sorbonist, slapping the Spaniard on the shoulder, and speaking in his ear. “Shall these scurvy Scots carry all before them?—I warrant me, no. We will make common cause against the whole beggarly nation; and in the meanwhile we entrust thee with this particular quarrel. See thou acquit thyself as beseemeth one of the descendants of the Cid.”

“Account him already abased,” returned Caravaja. “By Pelayo, I would the other were at his back, that both might be transfixed at a blow—ha!”

“To return to the subject of difference between ye,” said the Sorbonist, who was too much delighted with the prospect of a duel to allow the quarrel a chance of subsiding, while it was in his power to keep the flame alive—“to return to the difference,” said he

aloud, glancing at Ogilvy, "it must be conceded that, as a wassailer, this Crichton is without a peer. None of us may presume to cope with him in the matter of the flask and the flaggon, though we number amongst us some jolly toppers. Friar John with the Priestess of Bacbuc was a washy bibber compared with him."

"He worships at the shrines of other Priestesses besides her's of Bacbuc, if I be not wrongly informed;" added he of Montaigu, who understood the drift of his companion.

"Else wherefore our rejoinder to his *cartels*," returned the Sorbonist. "Do you not call to mind that beneath his arrogant defiance of our learned body, affixed to the walls of the Sorbonne it was written,—'That he who would behold this miracle of learning must hie to the tavern or the bordel.'—Was it not so, my Hidalgo?"

"I have myself seen him at the temulentive tavern of the Falcon," returned Caravaja, "and at the lupinarian haunts in

the Champ-Gaillard and the Val-d'Amour.—
You understand me—ha!”

“Ha!—ha!—ha!” chorussed the scholars.
“Thy Crichton is no stoic—he is a disciple of
Epicurus, Maitre Ecosais—*vel in puellam
impingit, vel in poculum*—ha! ha!”

“Tis said that he hath dealings with the
Evil One,” observed the man of Harcourt
with a mysterious air; “and that, like Jeanne
D’Arc, he hath surrendered his soul for his
temporal welfare. Hence his wondrous lore
—hence his supernatural beauty and accom-
plishments—hence his power of fascinating
the fair sex—hence his constant run of luck
with the dice—hence also is he invulnerable
to the sword.”

“Tis said also, that he has a familiar
spirit, who attends him in the semblance of
a black dog,” said Montaigu.

“Or in that of a dwarf, like the sooty imp
of Cosmo Ruggieri,” said Harcourt. “Is it
not so?” asked he, turning to the Scot.

“He lies in his throat who says so,” cried

the choleric Ogilvy. “To one and all of ye I breathe defiance—and there is not a brother in the College to which I belong who will not maintain my quarrel.”

A loud laugh of derision followed this sally of the Scotchman; and, ashamed of having justly exposed himself to their ridicule by his idle and unworthy display of passion, he held his peace and endeavoured to turn a deaf ear to their taunts.

CHAPTER II.

THE GELOSO.

Ham. Will you play upon this pipe?

Guil. My Lord, I cannot.

Ham. I pray you.

SHAKESPEARE.

WHILE his eye glanced fiercely round upon his tormentors, Ogilvy suddenly encountered the dark and earnest orbs of a youth, standing at a little distance from him, but fully within hearing of their contention, who appeared to take a lively interest in the cause of quarrel, though his sympathy was evidently strongly enlisted in behalf of the Scotchman. There was something in the appearance of this youth that, despite the excitement of his feelings, at once arrested the attention of Ogilvy. For some moments he could not remove his gaze from the youth's counte-

nance ; and when he did so, it was to muse upon its extraordinary beauty.

It was, indeed, a face to rivet the regard of a mere observer ; and the delicacy and refinement of the youth's features presented a striking contrast to the ruffianly coarse character of the visages by which he was surrounded. The contour was perfect. As if fashioned by him who should carve a Hebe, the chin was delicately wrought, while the lips, altogether unconscious of the downy honours of adolescence, corresponded in the same expression of rejoicing loveliness, and exuberant animal spirits. The full lips, however, were now compressed, and the thin proud nostrils distended with anger.

In age the youth could scarce have numbered more than sixteen summers, perhaps not so much, as his slight though exquisitely symmetrical figure, fragile even to effeminacy, indicated an early state of youth ; but the fire and intelligence of his glances showed that his spirit and resolution were far in advance

of his years. Tresses of jetty hair overshadowed his flushed cheek—the olive tint of which, together with his intensely black eyes, proclaimed him a native of some more southern clime—while his attire, though not otherwise singular, was neither that of a member of the University, nor accordant with any of the received usages then adopted by the good citizens of Paris. A cap of green Genoa velvet fell on one side of his head; a mantle of the same material, and of ampler fold than was the mode, was clasped with a chain of gold, and disposed so as best to hide his slender shape, and to give a semblance of more manly width to his narrow proportion of shoulder.

“ You are moved in my behalf, young sir,” said Ogilvy—remarking that the youth still kept his eye fixed upon him, forcing his way at the same time towards the spot where he stood. “ May I ask to which of our academies you belong ?”

“ I belong to none of your schools,” replied the youth—now shrinking from the Scot’s

approach as much as he had courted his attention from afar. "I came hither as a stranger, attracted solely by curiosity to learn the result of a disputation with which all Paris rings; and having unwittingly entered this crowd, though I would fain retire, I must now perforce abide its issue—which," added he, with some hesitation, and a slight increase of colour, "will I trust result in the triumph of your peerless countryman, in whose success I am, I own, nearly as much interested as yourself."

There was a music in the tones that vibrated in a strange manner upon the heart of Ogilvy.

"As I have a soul to be saved," thought he, "but that they are boy's lips that uttered that speech, I could have sworn it was the very voice of my gentle Marion addressing me as she was wont to do on summer nights long—long since flown, and in spots far—far away; and, but that the eyes are darker, and a thought or so larger, I could swear they had the same look, too. By St. Andrew, but it is

singular how like they are. I would gladly know, if he be not from my own country, what can make him express himself so warmly in behalf of Crichton? Hark ye, young Sir," cried he aloud, "you are not, I suppose, from Scotland, are ye?"

The youth could scarce forbear a smile at the inquiry; but he shook his head in denial. The smile that severed the lips displayed a set of teeth, brilliant as pearls.

"The very mouth is Marion's," thought Ogilvy.

"From Scotland?" shouted the Sorbonist. "Can any good come from out that rascal country? I know this youth well—he is of Venice—one of the Gelosi—one of the Italian troop who have the King's licence to enact their plays at the Hôtel de Bourbon. I thought I knew the face and figure, but the voice was not to be mistaken.—'Tis he who singeth the airs in the comedies; and right well, too, I warrant me. The ladies are all transported with him. Ah!—a thought strikes

me,—we have a minute or two to spare,—why not employ it in a song? What say you, comrades, shall we lose this golden opportunity?—A song!—a song!”

“Bravo!—bravo!” cried the scholars, clapping their hands. “Nothing could be better;—a song by all means;” and a circle of faces was presently formed round the Venetian.

Meanwhile Ogilvy, not less annoyed at the turn which affairs had taken, than at the supposed imputations thrown out against the stranger, for, not being untingured by the prejudices of his country, as to the morality of stage representations, he entertained a feeling of contempt, amounting almost to abhorrence, for the vocation of an actor, thus addressed him:—“Hath he not belied thee?” said he, with something of distrust.—“Say he hath spoken falsely—say thou art no player—no hired mimic, and, by the pious memory of John Knox, I will hurl back the foul aspersion in his teeth.”

“Peace!” cried the scholar of Montaigu;

“down with the froward Scot, if he offer further interruption.”

“Let him answer me, and I am dumb,” returned the resolute Ogilvy. “Once more, stranger,—have I misconstrued thee?”

“You have done so if you supposed me other than I am,” replied the youth, raising his head. “I am of Venice—I am one of the Gelosi!”

“You hear him,” cried the Sorbonist. “He admits it; now, give us the song without more ado.”

“I deny not my calling” replied the Venetian, “but I will not sing at your bidding.”

“We will see that,” returned the Sorbonist. “There are pumps within our courts whose waters are as song-compelling as those of Helicon.—Their virtue is marvellous.”

“Sangre di Dios! let us drag the young spark thither,” cried Caravaja; “he will find his voice, I’ll engage, rather than brook the catarrhs likely to be engendered by the gelid fount.”

Saying which, he laid his hand rudely upon the Venetian's shoulder. The latter started back,—his dark eyes shot lightnings at the aggressor, while, quick as thought, he drew forth a stiletto from his bosom, and placed it at Caravaja's throat.

“Withdraw thy hand from my person,” cried he, “or by St. Mark I will strike!”

And Caravaja seeing, from his manner, that the Venetian was in earnest, deemed it prudent to relinquish his hold, which he did with a shrug and his habitual braggadocio exclamation.

“Bravissimo!” shouted the by-standers with renewed acclamations; “a capital stage stroke;—it would tell famously at the Hôtel de Bourbon.”

“By my faith!” said the Englishman, laughing heartily, “our Spaniard hath the worst of it.”

“I pray you, Signori,” said the Geloso, heedless of their sarcasm, taking off his cap and displaying at the same time a shower of

blackest ringlets. "I beseech you to let me depart without further molestation; I have it not in my power to comply with your wishes, neither do I see your title to require my compliance.—Though a player, I am not wholly unfriended; and if——"

"He threatens us," said the Sorbonist;—"marked you that *if*? It will never do to give up our point. The song, Signor Geloso, and then depart as soon as you list."

"Never!" replied the Venetian; "and I counsel ye to beware how you drive me to extremities."

"If none other will take the youth's part I will," said the Englishman—"I care not if he be Geloso—or Diaboloso. If all are against him—I am for him. The Blounts ever side with the weaker party, and Simon Blount will not disgrace the name he bears. Come, Sir Scot, this quarrel is partly thine. Draw thy blade, man, and stand by this poor lad, who looks as if he had never seen a blow struck before."

A blithe jingle of small silver bells was heard amongst the crowd, offering a seasonable interruption to the brawl, and a very fantastic little personage, from whom the sound proceeded, strove to press forward. He was clad in a singular parti-coloured raiment, composed of white, crimson, and blue damask, so quaintly fashioned, and striped with such numberless straight and horizontal lines that it produced the most whimsical effect imaginable. His slashed *just-au-corps* was puffed out at the hips in the most extravagant style, and served as an admirable foil to his thin mis-shapen legs, decked in hose of amaranthine hue. Over his shoulders was thrown a surcoat which resembled nothing so nearly as the peculiar vestment wherewith the knave of clubs is arrayed, and which depended in huge sleeves over his arms.

At the back of this surcoat the royal arms were emblazoned in gold tissue, and again displayed on either sleeve. Innumerable tags, to which, as well as to the edges of his

sleeves, hung the bells in question, adorned each knee. Around his neck he wore a chain of small medallions, stamped with devices *à la folie*, the gift of his *cher Henriot*, as he fraternally termed his royal master, and his tall conical cap—which had superseded the old orthodox cock’s-comb, then quite out of date—had the triple points *à la cornette*, borne by all the servitors of the court. In his hand he carried his ensign of office—the bauble, an ebony truncheon decorated with the fool’s head, cast in wrought silver. A huge *escarcelle*, or pouch, filled with confecti-
onary, of which he was immoderately fond, hung at his girdle, and near it was stuck a formidable dagger of lath.

This bizarre figure was the King’s favourite buffoon, Chicot.

“By your leave, my Masters,” cried he, shouldering his way through the crowd, and bestowing buffets with his bauble upon all who opposed his progress. “Why would you stop me? Folly was ever current in the

University of Paris. Besides, all my wisdom is needed. They are about to souse a man in cold water to give him a voice. That were a feat worthy the first Fool in France. I should lose my post were I not to assist. Have a care, I say. Make way for the Abbé of the Béjaunes, though he be not mounted on his ass, as at the Feast of the Innocents."

And planting himself immediately before the Geloso, to whom he nodded in the most familiar manner, Chicot drew his lathen dagger, and, with abundance of gesticulations and grimaces, brandished it in the face of the students.

"This youth, who is my foster-brother," said the Jester (here there was a loud laugh), "is in the right to refuse you. He is engaged for the masque to-night, and must not exhibit himself before hand. Our gossip Henri is chary of his services. If you want music come with us to the gates of the Louvre. The band of the Swiss Guard is celebrated for its quick movement."

“ Exasperate them not, kind Signor,” whispered the Geloso, “ I will rather comply with their demands, unreasonable though they be, than endanger another’s safety by refusal. Signori,” continued he, addressing his persecutors, “ I will do your bidding—provided I am free to depart when my song is ended.”

“ Agreed !” shouted the scholars, waving their caps. In an instant the clamour ceased. A dense ring was formed around the Venetian ; while in a voice of the most exquisite modulation, though with something of sarcasm in its tone, he sang the following madrigal - evidently the inspiration of the moment.

The Scottish Cavalier.

I.

FROM Scotia’s clime to laughing France

The peerless Crichton came ;

Like him no knight could shiver lance,

Wield sword, or worship dame.

Alas ! each maiden sighs in vain,

He turns a careless ear :

For *Queenly* fetters fast enchain

The Scottish Cavalier !

II.

But not o'er camp and court, alone,
 Resistless Crichton rules ;
 Logicians next, defeated, own
 His empire o'er the Schools.
 'Gainst sophists shrewd shall wit prevail,
 Though tome on tome they rear ;
 And pedants pale, as victor, hail
 The Scottish Cavalier !

“ No more of this,” cried the Sorbonist,
 “ this is not the song we bargained for.
 We will have thy favorite air from *La Maddalena* — or the canzonet from *La Florinda* — or thou stirrest not, mon mignon.”

“ Bah !” ejaculated Chicot—“ you are no judges. The song was charming — and I vote for its repetition. But the buffoonery of the troop at the hôtel of the Abbé de Clugni, in the Rue des Mathurins would be more in your way. What say you to a motet from their last *sotie*—*La Farce joyeuse des béjaunes sophistes* ?”

“Ventrebleu! What mockery is this?” cried one of the scholars with the preposterous paper collars. “Are we to be chaffered out of our projects by yon magot-pie, who, having newly-escaped his cage, hath flown hither to babble at his ease?”

“’Tis well,” returned Chicot, “that, like some I wot of, I have not arrayed myself in peacock’s plumes. Strut as it may, the daw will out; and roar as loud and lion-like as he may, the ass is an ass still. Fool as I am, I am not folly’s counterfeit. The ape, but not the ape’s shadow, compère. ‘By the caul you may know the calf;’ that is your cry, they tell me. Now, were your calf-ship to be judged by that rule, we could scarce find subject fitter for the shambles.”

“A thousand devils!” cried the enraged scholar. “Were you ten times the licensed fool you are, you shall repent this insolence.”

“Back!” exclaimed Blount, interposing his bludgeon so as to ward off the blow aimed at

the jester's sconce. "A bloody cock's-comb were an unseemly consummation to such gay apparel—reserve thy blows for one more able to requite them—seest thou not his weapon is of lath."

"Let him keep better rule over his tongue then," replied the angry scholar.

"Ha! ha! ha!" cried Chicot, screaming with laughter, "stay him not. I will combat with him to the outrance. My marotte to his ruff, but I slay him on the exchange of a stoccata—my *feeble* shall prove his *reverse*."

"In the mean time we are losing sight of our songster," said the Sorbonist. "What hath become of the Geloso?"

"Vanished, as I think," exclaimed Caravaja. "I no where behold him."

"I had not remarked his departure," mentally ejaculated Ogilvy, "but 'tis better thus. I could not have refused the poor youth aid in case of need, and yet my soul revolts at the thought of being embroiled in the quarrel of

a stage-player, and an Italian, moreover. 'Tis strange the face should haunt me so much. I will think of him no more."

But in spite of his resolution, Ogilvy could not prevent his eyes from wandering amongst the distant ranks of the scholars in search of the fugitive. His quest was vain: during the confusion, it would seem, created by the Jester's defiance of the student, and not improbably by his connivance, or that of the Englishman, the Venetian had contrived, unobserved, to make good his retreat.

"Hath Maître Chicot secreted him in his escarcelle? It is large enough," said the Sorbonist—

"Or in the sleeves of his surcoat?" said the Bernardin.

"Or swallowed him as Gargantua did the pilgrim," added Caravaja, laughing.

"Or as thou wouldst a cup of Xeres, were it proffered thee, or thine own words if need be, Señor Caballero," said the Jester.

"Señor Satan," roared Caravaja, unsheath-

ing his sword, "I will carve thee into as many slices as there are patches in thy jerkin—sa—ha!"

"Or as there are dints on thy sword, of thine own notching," rejoined Chicot, with a malignant grin—"or oaths in thy mouth, of thine own coining—or lies in thy brain, of thine own hatching—or dice in thy pocket, of thine own loading—or pence in thy pouch, of thine own pilfering—or scars in thy back, of thine own procuring—ha! ha! Shred me into as many pieces as thy own Spanish onion, and the number shall yet be far below thy own countless peccadilloes—sa—ha!"

"Sangre di Dios! Give me way to the scurrilous ribald," vociferated Caravaja, furious as a bull chafed by the matador, flourishing his rapier and stamping on the ground, and with difficulty withheld by the students. But nothing could check the wild exhilaration of the Jester, who was nigh convulsed with laughter at the ineffectual attempts of the vindictive Spaniard to reach him. He

exhibited no alarm, but stood his ground as carelessly as if no danger threatened him. Nay, he even continued his galling mockery, and would, in all probability, have paid the penalty of his rashness, had not a new incident occurred which operated as a diversion in his favour, inasmuch as it attracted universal attention.

The gates of the College of Navarre were suddenly thrown open, and a long-continued thunder of applause bursting from within, announced the conclusion of the debate. That it had terminated in favour of Crichton could no longer be doubted, as his name formed the burthen of all the plaudits with which the courts were ringing.

All was excitement : there was a general movement. Ogilvy could no longer restrain himself — pushing forward by prodigious efforts, he secured to himself a position at the portal.

The first person who presented himself to his inquiring eyes, was a gallant figure in a

glittering steel corslet, crossed by a silken sash, who bore at his side a long sword with a magnificent handle, and upon his shoulder a lance of some six feet in length, headed with a long scarlet tassel, and brass half-moon pendant.

“Is not Crichton victorious?” asked Ogilvy of the Captain of the Guard, for such he was.

“He hath acquitted himself to admiration,” replied the guardsman, who, contrary to the custom of such gentry, (for Captains of the Guard have been fine gentlemen in all ages), did not appear to be displeased at this appeal to his courtesy, “and the Rector hath adjudged him all the honours that can be bestowed by the University.”

“Hurrah for old Scotland,” shouted Ogilvy, throwing his bonnet in the air, “I was sure it would be so; this is a day worth living for. *Hæc olim meminisse juvabit!*”

“Thou at least shalt have reason to remember it,” muttered Caravaja, who being opposite to him, heard the exclamation—“and he

too, perchance," added he, frowning gloomily, and drawing his cloak over his shoulder.

"If the noble Crichton be compatriot of yours, you are in the right to be proud of him," replied the Captain Larchant, "for the memory of his deeds of this day will live as long as learning shall be held in reverence. Never before hath such a marvellous display of universal erudition been heard within these schools. By my faith, I am absolutely wonderstruck, and not I alone, but all—in proof of which I need only tell you, that coupling his matchless scholarship with his extraordinary accomplishments, the Professors in their address to him at the close of the controversy, have bestowed upon him the epithet of 'ADMIRABLE'—an appellation by which he deserves ever after to be distinguished."

"The Admirable Crichton!" echoed Ogilvy—"hear you that!—a title adjudged to him by the whole conclave of the University—hurrah! THE ADMIRABLE CRICHTON! 'Tis a name will find an echo in the heart of

every true Scot. By St. Andrew! this is a proud day."

"In the mean time," said Larchant, smiling at Ogilvy's exultations, and describing a circle with the point of his lance, "I must trouble you to stand back, Messieurs Scholars, and leave free passage for the Rector and his train. Archers advance, and make clear the way, and let the companies of the Baron D'Épernon and of the Vicomte de Joyeuse be summoned as well as the guard of His Excellency, Seigneur René de Villequier. Patience, Messieurs, you will hear all particulars anon."

Saying which, he retired, and the men-at-arms, less complaisant than their leaders, soon succeeded in forcing back the crowd.

CHAPTER III.

THE RECTOR.

The Rector now finding it high time to give some relaxation to these worthy spirits, which, during such a long space had been so intensely bent upon the abstrusest speculations, rose up, and saluting the divine Crichton, after he had made an elegant panegyric, or encomiastic speech of half an hour's continuance, tending to nothing else but the extolling of him for the rare and most singular gifts with which God and nature had endowed him, presented him with a diamond ring, and a purse full of gold.—SIR THOMAS URQUHART.

As the Archers advanced, and posted one of their number at every interval of ten paces, the Scholars drew back, and, with almost military precision, formed themselves into two solid bodies.

A profound hush of silent expectation reigned throughout their lines; each eye was directed towards the embrowned archway of the Academy, but not a word was uttered.

All remained in postures as motionless as those of the statues of Philippe-le-Bel and Jeanne de Navarre his spouse, (the foundress of the institution), who looked from their niches on the portal like mute spectators of the scene.

Meanwhile, from out the gateway there issued such a constant stream of grave and gowned dignitaries, that the space between the two files of students was presently filled up by a moving mass of robes and caps.

First, flourishing his rod of office, a blue wand plentifully besprinkled with fleurs-de-lis of gold, alternately planting it on the ground, or elevating it in the air, with a strut and simper worthy of Malvolio, strode forth the Clerk of the Messengers, who bore upon his tunic the blazon of the University, namely, a hand descending from the sky, holding a book, surrounded by three fleurs-de-lis, *or*, on a field, *azure*.

Glancing at the scholars with a supercilious smile, the herald passed on.

Next came the bedels and minor-bedels of all the Faculties, who by some accident were so jumbled together, that it was impossible to determine or arrange any order of precedence. All put their best feet foremost. Medicine trod hard on the heels of Theology and the Arts, while Civil Law appeared most unci- villy inclined to outstrip all three. These bedels or *greffiers* were jolly robustious souls, bending beneath the weight of their ponde- rous silver maces, and attired in gowns of black, blue, violet, or dark red, each colour denoting the Faculty to which the wearer pertained.

To the bedels succeeded a confusion worse confounded, in the heads of the Faculties themselves, who strove in vain to collect together their scattered forces, or to form them into any thing like processional array.

Violations of collegiate etiquette took place each instant. Here was a Doctor of Theology in his black cope edged with ermine, by the side of a *procureur* of the Nations, in his red

robe of office ; a propinquity which the Theologian internally execrated, and openly resented. There a Doctor of Medicine in his scarlet cope, trimmed with minever, was elbowed by a licentiate of Theology, who happened to be suppler of joint, and who was arrayed in cope of sable, bordered with white fur. No degrees were respected. The Doctors of the Canon and Civil Law, who had kept together during the debate, and whose costume consisted of scarlet robes with hoods of fur, were most scandalously hustled in maintaining their ground against a rush of youthful bachelors of Medicine.

Notwithstanding all this confusion of raiments, which were so massed and heaped together as to present an almost rainbow variety of tints in the rays of the setting sun—notwithstanding the utter want of order which occasioned much objurgation on the part of the seniors, and not a little expenditure of patience as well as of ermine, by their too close proximity to each other—not-

withstanding all this, the whole body of Doctors, Professors, Bachelors, and Licentiates, were unanimous upon one point—viz. that the disputation at which they had assisted had been more admirably contested than any controversy since the days of Peter Abelard, and Berengarius, and that in vanquishing them, Crichton had vanquished the whole world of science and learning.

Suddenly the shrill blast of a trumpet shook the air, and echoed far down the hill of St. Génévieve. The call was immediately answered by the trampling of a troop of horsemen in the distance. Presently the clatter of hoofs drew nearer, and a few seconds had not elapsed ere two companies, each consisting of fifty archers of the body-guard, fully accoutred and superbly mounted, rode into the area and drew up in the rear of the students. Besides this array of soldiery might be seen the numerous retinue of René de Villequier, composed not merely of his own lacqueys and attendants in their sumptuous

apparel of blue and red cloth, but of certain armed cross-bowmen of the *Guet Royal*, headed by their Chevalier, who surrounded the Governor's huge unwieldy caroché of state and richly caparisoned Flanders horses. Altogether it was a gallant sight; and the scholars, though not entirely satisfied with the presence of so many intruders, and perhaps not wholly unawed by their numbers, manifested no further show of discontent.

A pause now took place in the procession. The foremost in advance came to a halt, and the whole body wheeled round and faced the college. Three semicircles were thus formed, of which the professors described the inner and the lesser, the archers on horseback the outer and wider, and the students the intermediate and denser one. Still, however, a small vacant space was preserved before the portal.

At this instant a murmur arose amongst the schoolmen. "He comes—he comes"—flew from one to the other with the rapidity of lightning.

Four other mace-bearers, walking abreast, strode deliberately through the gateway, as if they had been the only objects of interest, and drew up two on either side.

The course was now completely unobstructed. The Rector appeared—he was a man of venerable aspect and majestic mien, and well became the magnificent apparel—the ample stole of scarlet, and mantle of snowy ermine, in which, as chief of the University, he was clad. A sash of sky-blue silk crossed his robe, and sustained a sumptuous velvet escarcelle, fringed with lace and decorated with buttons of gold. Upon his head he wore the square cap of a Doctor of Theology.

At his side, and on his right hand, walked one on whom all eyes were bent with wonder and curiosity. The Rector and his companion stopped without the gateway, when, as if they were influenced by some sudden and uncontrollable impulse, one long, loud, continuous acclamation burst from the ranks of the scholars. Nor were the graver members of

the University silent. Even the Doctors of Theology lent the aid of their voices—while the archers, raising themselves in their stirrups, lifted their helmets from their brows, and waving them in the air, increased and prolonged the clamour by their vociferations.

Crichton, for the reader will no doubt have surmised that he was the “load-star of all eyes,” possessed an exterior so striking, and a manner so eminently prepossessing, that his mere appearance seemed to act like a spell on the beholders. The strongest sympathy was instantly and universally excited in his favour. Youth is ever interesting; but youth so richly graced as Crichton’s could not fail to produce an extraordinary impression. At the sight of him the whole aspect of things was changed. Enthusiasm, amounting almost to devotion, usurped the place of animosity, and all vindictive feelings resulting from wounded pride or other petty annoyances, were obliterated or forgotten. Even discomfiture wore the aspect of victory.

But in the demeanour of the victor no external sign of self-elation was perceptible. He might not be insensible to the distinction of his achievement, but he plumed himself not upon it, or rather, with the modesty ever inherent in true greatness, appeared to under-rate his own success. His cheek was slightly flushed, and a smile of tempered satisfaction played upon his countenance as he acknowledged the stunning applauses of the concourse before him. No traces of over-exertion or excitement were visible in his features or deportment. His brow was unclouded, his look serene, his step buoyant;—and, as his bright eye wandered over the multitude, there was not an individual upon whom his gaze momentarily rested, but felt his heart leap within his breast.

The countenance of Crichton was one that Phidias might have portrayed, so nearly did its elevated and ennobled character of beauty approach to the ideal standard of perfection erected by the great Athenian sculptor.

Chiselled like those of some ancient head of the Delphic God, the features were wrought with the utmost fineness and precision—the contour of the face was classical and harmonious—the *mens divinior* breathed from every lineament—the lips were firm, full, and fraught with sensibility, yet giving token of the most dauntless resolution—the chin was proudly curved—the nose Grecian—the nostril thin and haughty as that of an unbroken barb of the desert—the brow was ample and majestic, shaded by hair of lightest brown, disposed in thick ringlets after the manner of the antique.* There was a brilliancy of colour and a sparkling freshness in Crichton's complexion, the more surprising, as the pallid hue, and debilitated look of the toil-worn student might more naturally be expected in his features than the rosy bloom of health. In compliance with the fashion of the day, a slight

* Crichton is described in the letter of Aldus Manutius to the Duke of Sora, elsewhere quoted, as “*grande di statura, di pelo biondo, et d’aspetto bellissimo.*”

moustache feathered his upper lip, and a short, pointed beard, clothed his chin and added to the grave manliness of his aspect.

One blemish, if such it could with propriety be termed, existed in Crichton's physiognomy. Around his right eye was stamped a faint roseate mark, as is evidenced by Aldus Manutius, who, in his dedication to Crichton, of the Paradoxes of Cicero has said, "*cum te omnes signo rubeæ rosæ, quod tibi Natura circa dextrum lumen impressit, tanquam unicam et raram in terris avem, homines cognoscerent.*" This defect would scarcely be worth mentioning, inasmuch as it by no means detracted from the beauty and expression of his countenance, and, indeed, could scarcely be detected except by very near observance, were not its statement necessary to the perfect individuality of the portrait which we wish to present to the reader.

Crichton's attire, which partook more of his chivalrous than of his scholastic character, was that of a complete cavalier of the period, and

was calculated to display to its utmost advantage the faultless symmetry of figure with which Nature, not less lavish than Art and Science in her gifts, had endowed him. A doublet of white damask, slashed with black bands of the same material, crossed by other bands so as to form a sort of grating, buttoned from the throat to the girdle, and fitting closely to the person, revealed the outline of his full Antinous-like chest, as well as his slender circumference of waist; while the just proportions of his lower limbs were as accurately defined by the satin *hauts-de-chausses*, similar in colour to his doublet, and similarly slashed, in which they were enveloped. A short and singularly cut Spanish cloak of black velvet, edged with gold lace, hung from his left shoulder, and descended as low as the elbow. His arms were a rapier and poignard suspended from a richly ornamented girdle. Boots of buff-skin, sharply pointed at the toe, as was then the mode, were fitted upon feet that seemed almost dimi-

nutive in comparison with the lofty stature of the wearer. His broad-rimmed, steeple-crowned hat of black felt was looped with a diamond buckle, and crested by a single green feather.

To the modern observer perhaps the triple folds of his ruff and the voluminous width of his sleeve might appear formal and redundant; but these exuberances were then altogether unnoticed, or possibly regarded with as much complacency as a sleeve *à gigot* might be at the present time. In sooth, despite its stiffness and extravagance, there was something picturesque and imposing in the court costume of Henri III. (who, if he had no especial genius for monarchy, had unquestionably a great talent for the toilet), that amply redeemed its incongruities of taste. Crichton's figure, however, owed little to the adventitious circumstance of dress, and in fact was wholly independent of it.

As he lingered for an instant beneath the shadow of the archway, the Rector laid his

hand upon his shoulder, with the intention, apparently, of arresting for a short space his further progress. He was not, perhaps, unwilling to afford the junior members of the University, who had been debarred from attending the disputation, a momentary opportunity of noting the striking personal appearance of one, whose name would long be associated with its annals — or it might be that he was influenced by some ulterior motive. Whatever occasioned the delay, it was a matter of gratulation to the scholars, who renewed their applauses in consequence.

“By the rood!” exclaimed the Sorbonist, “I am glad they have come to a pause. We were out in our reckoning, Don Diego; this Crichton is a perfect knight of romance, a very Bayard as well as Politian. Was there ever such a combination of qualities! — I can scarce credit my senses when I look at him; why, he hath barely a beard upon his chin, and yet to vanquish all our reverend

Doctors! Shame and confusion to *them*, and glory and renown to *him*."

"Humph!" muttered Caravaja. "Will he pass by *us*, think you?"

"I know not," returned the Sorbonist; "let us if possible get nearer. Methinks the venerable Adrian is making up his mouth to a speech. He deserves to be hooted for his pains—the toothless mumblor! But we will hear what he has to say. Perhaps he may make out a good case. Our Scot I see is in the fore ranks, and shouting loud enough to split our ears and his own lungs. Peace in front, I say!—keep him in view, my Hidalgo, or we may lose him in the confusion."

"I will do more," returned Caravaja; "I will dog him like his own shadow. Cuerpo! he 'scapes me not, rely on it. Canst thou not aid me to approach him?"

"My elbows are at your service," replied the Sorbonist—"bravely done! We have effected a passage with more ease than I anticipated, thanks to thy sharp bones. By my faith,

we are in the very nick of time. Look at the Seigneurs D'Épernon and Joyeuse, our King's first favourites. They are accounted the handsomest as they are the bravest of his Court—and yet, certes, peerless cavaliers though they be, they bear no comparison with our northern luminary.”

“You own it!” cried Ogilvy, whom the speakers had approached. “You admit my countryman's superiority—I am satisfied. Let not our quarrel go further. How say you, Sir Spaniard, will you refuse me your hand? I was hasty, and reck'd not what I said. We will drown the remembrance of our brawl over a stoup of claret. I would willingly drink a cup to the health of our admirable Crichton.”

Ogilvy stretched out his hand. Caravaja, however, hesitated to accept it.

“By the cinders of St. Anthony!” muttered he, “the duélo must take its course.”

“St. Anthony forefend!” whispered the Sorbonist. “Quaff his wine and thou wilt head

coals of fire on thine enemy's head. A cup of claret shed in the tavern is better than his blood spilt in the duélo. Besides," added he in a still lower key, "that need be no hindrance to the subsequent arrangement of the affair, if you see fitting. I warrant me, you will readily find new grounds for offence. Swallow thy indignation," continued he aloud, "and take the hand of the valiant Scot."

"Bién," said Caravaja, apparently convinced by the reasoning of the Sorbonist; "I assent. We will comotate to the health of 'The Admirable Crichton,' since such is the epithet by which he is henceforth to be distinguished."

"Enough," said Ogilvy, grasping the hand of the Spaniard; "quit not my side in the press—or meet me anon at the Pine-Apple."

"Conclude me there already," returned Caravaja.

Meantime, all the more distinguished auditors of the disputation, including the Governor of Paris, the Ambassadors, the Vicomte de Joyeuse, and the Baron D'Épernon, who,

with some others, (ushered forth by the Grand Master of the College of Navarre, Doctor Launoi, and escorted by the two principals of Dialectics and Philosophy,) had followed close upon the steps of the Rector, were drawn up in a small phalanx beside them, and appeared to await their further movements. Amidst this group the stately figures and magnificent accoutrements of the two favourites of the King stood out conspicuously. Both were esteemed the flower of the chivalry of their time, and both were equally remarkable for their gallantry, their good looks, and reckless courage. Of Joyeuse it has been said by Voltaire that,

*De tous les favoris qu' idolâtrait Valois,
Qui flattoient sa mollesse, et lui donnaient des lois,
Joyeuse, né d'un sang chez les Français insigne,
D'une faveur si haute était le moins indigne :
Il avait des vertus.**

Neither was Jean-Louis de Nogaret de la Valette, Baron D'Épernon, without many brilliant qualities. To his vigour and address,

* Henriade Chant III.

Henri was subsequently indebted for the preservation of his throne ; and to him perhaps might be traced the ultimate overthrow of the Guises, whom he bitterly hated, and uniformly opposed.

D'Épernon still wore a suit of sables in memory of his brother in arms Saint-Mégrin, assassinated by order, it was supposed, of the Duke of Mayenne, on suspicion of an amour with his sister-in-law, the Duchess of Guise. His mourning, however, was of the most costly description, and his black mantle was embroidered with the cross of the Holy Ghost in orange-coloured velvet, passmented with silver, of which newly-instituted order he, as well as his companion, was a Knight Commander. Joyeuse was radiant in orange-coloured satin, and velvet of the most dazzling hues. Nothing could be more splendid than his attire, unless perhaps it was that of René de Villequier, who, being also a Knight Commander of the Holy Ghost, was upon this occasion bedizened in all the

finery of its full paraphernalia, the doublet and *chausses* of silver tissue, and the sweeping mantle of black velvet bordered with fleurs-de-lis of gold and tongues of flame intermingled with the royal cipher. From the necks of all three, suspended by a blue riband, hung the decoration of the lesser order, a small elaborately chased cross and dove of silver.

We must not omit to state, that amongst this groupe were to be seen the Abbé de Brantôme and the poet Ronsard.

Brantôme had a piercing eye, a thin visage, and a nose slightly aquiline. Immense moustaches clothed his long upper lip, but his lofty brow was almost entirely destitute of hair. There was much of the courtier in his manner, but his smile was sarcastic, and a vein of irony might be detected even in his most flowery compliments. A sneer was habitual to his lips, and his eye, though full and keen, was inclosed within lids of a pinkish hue and blear expression, sufficiently indicating the libertinage of his character. His attire was that of the

court fashion. His doublet was of deep blue, slashed with white, the colours of Marguerite de Valois, whose miniature he wore attached to a chain of medallions. He bore, also, the order of St. Michael, then, however, in great disrepute, and called *le Collier à toute bête*. The Abbé de Brantôme was then a man of middle age, somewhat on the wane; and his frame appeared prematurely withered. His shoulders were bent, and his legs shrunk within his hose. His look was sharp, suspicious, penetrating; and his general manner that of a shrewd and accurate observer.

Age, and perhaps the life of sensuality he was known to have led, had indeed committed sad havoc upon the once well-favoured person of the poet Ronsard. He was no longer the *beau Page* whose manner fascinated James of Scotland, and, perchance, his Queen. Nor was he what he sung of himself, when, near his fortieth year, he said—

*Trente et sept ans passez, et encore n'ai je atteint
 Dans, ni de maladie, et en toutes les sortes
 Mes nerfs dont bien tendus, et mes veines bien fortes ;*

*Et si j'ai le teint palle, et le cheveu grison
Mes membres toutefois sont hors de saison.*

He now complained both of ill health and years. Such locks as remained to him had become a "sable silvered." His tint of skin was dull and deadly pale; and, so grievously tormented was he with his old enemy, the gout, that he was compelled to support his frame, at least on the present occasion, upon a crutch. Nevertheless, though coarse and gross of person, the countenance of the poet was handsome and intelligent, and, except when an awkward twinge crossed it, expressive of extreme good humour.

"Methinks, my dear Lord Abbé," said Ronsard, looking around with some uneasiness, and addressing Brantôme, "it were scarce wise to have called together this tumultuous array. Our Cæsar may be crowned in the Capitol while we are sacrificed at his ovation. I am too well acquainted with the force of the poet's words—

Monstrari digito et dicier 'hic est'—

as occasionally exemplified towards me by the students, to desire any further illustration of their abilities in my own person."

"You have changed your tune since the reception of your last masque, brother bard," said Chicot, who had forced himself unperceived amongst them. "These same scholars, I remember, were once the only patrons of the Muses. Now they have lost their discrimination. But give yourself no trouble: you will pass unnoticed this time depend on't gossip. Even I, you see, for a marvel, have escaped attention."

"Then, of a surety, I will put myself under thy escort," said the Poet, seizing the arm of the Jester. "It was the abandonment of folly that hath brought me into disrepute. Thou shalt help me to amend. But what hath brought one of thy calling into the haunts of wisdom, my merry gossip?"

"Wisdom and folly are nearer akin than you suppose," returned Chicot; "and fools who have soared to a greater height than I

can ever aspire, have been caught within these owl-roosts. I like a fine sight as well as my neighbours; and though I care not to be be-spattered with a shower of *ans* and *utrums*, or sit out a twelve-hours bout of rhetoric and philosophy, where, if one man hath not all the talk to himself, he, at least, doth his best to silence his comrades, I am mightily pleased to come in, as it were, for the last act of a dull comedy, and to enjoy a laugh at the veteran stagers who have been driven off the boards by a youthful actor who, though he hath spent but a tithe of the time in the service, understandeth their craft better than themselves."

"Have a care, sirrah," said Brantôme; "thou art within hearing of the noble Crichton."

"The noble Crichton will acquit me of flattery, then," rejoined the Jester. "I am one of those who speak truth behind a man's back, and falsehood to his face, and care not to avouch it. Pierre de Bourdeille, a word in thine ear! Thou wearest thy mistress's

colours on thy pourpoint, and her miniature at thy neck, but she hath another image than thine at her heart. Take a fool's counsel, and forget her."

Brantôme reddened with anger, but Chicot, who had all the galling pertinacity of a gad-fly, continued. "You who are so well versed in history, Seigneur, will assuredly recollect the tradition of the fair Queen, who founded this old pile, and whose statue graces its door-way, how, above all her courtly train, she smiled upon the *scholar* Buridan; and how, within her bower upon the Seine she—but you mind the tale, I see,—methinks we might find a modern parallel to that ancient legend. After all, Jeanne de Navarre was but a fickle jade, and played her lovers scurv'y tricks. Well might poor Buridan con over his sophism of the 'Asses Bridge,' when in danger of the flood beneath his mistress's window—

*Semblablement où est la Royne
Qui commanda que Buridan
Fut jetté en ung sac en Seine?—*

Run not the verses so : Ha, ha !” And bursting into a loud laugh, the Jester flew to the side of the Vicomte de Joyeuse for protection.

“ Well encountered, cousin D’Arques,” said he ; “ our dear Henriot needed thy presence at the Fair of St. Germain this morning. Hadst thou or D’Épernon been with him, the insult he brooked would not have passed unnoticed.”

“ What insult hath his Majesty endured ?” asked the Vicomte eagerly. “ Let me hear it that I may yet avenge it !”

“ ’Tis a matter of little moment,” returned Chicot ; “ you shall know anon,—that is, when your escort draws up to the gateway. It relates to yon graceless students, who have been studying court fashions rather than scholarly discourse ; and having plucked a leaf out of your books, have twisted it fool-fashion round their necks, as you perceive.”

“ I observe them,” replied Joyeuse. “ ’Tis an insolent device of the Guise, or his

faction. I would brain the knaves, but it were idle to bestow a thought on the puppets while the charlatan showman is to be met with."

"Our gossip, Henriot, thought otherwise," said the Jester, "when these varlets roared within ear-shot of him, '*à la fraize on connoît le veau!*'"

"Mort-Dieu!" exclaimed Joyeuse. "What ho! there, Captain Larchant! Summon my company of Archers—give me my horse! To the saddle, D'Épernon, and bring up thy *quarante cinq*. We will disperse this rabble rout! We will bind them hand and heel—scourge them to the bone—slay in case of resistance!—to the saddle, I say!"

"Moderate thy choler, Joyeuse," said D'Épernon, holding back the Vicomte, and addressing him in a low tone—"Thou wilt only incur his Majesty's displeasure by involving thyself in a broil with the University, and gladden the hearts of the Guisards and the Leaguers, who would rejoice in thy rash-

ness. The present is not fitting season for retaliation,—we will find surer means of vengeance.”

“ I would spurn the *canaille* beneath my charger’s feet,” replied Joyeuse—“ but be it as thou wilt. The Rector, I know, is as jealous of his privileges as the Guise of his Duchess, and we might not perhaps have sufficient plea of justification. Let him hang the knaves himself, and I am satisfied—’twill save the Provost Marshal a labour.”

“ All in good time,” replied D’Épernon, “ and his conference with Crichton concluded, the Rector appears inclined to address his *cari alumni*: I trust in terms of sufficient reprobation. Give attention to his words.”

The Rector, who had, apparently much against Crichton’s inclination, detained him in earnest conversation at the portal, now turned towards the Scholars, intimating his intention of addressing them.

The clamour ceased as soon as his gestures were understood, and there was a profound silence as he spoke.

“ Messieurs Scholars of the University of Paris,” said the Rector, “ you have already learned, I doubt not, that your most erudite doctors and professors have this day sustained a defeat ; a defeat, however, which, while it reflects no disgrace on the conquered, enhances the glory of the victor. In the whole circle of science and learning the noble Crichton hath approved his supremacy ; and we willingly surrender to him our laurels. May he long continue to wear them, and may his career, the dawn of which is so brilliant, be equally glorious at its close ! Like the great Poet Dante he came hither unknown—like Dante he departeth with a reputation which will be blazed throughout all the schools of Europe. In earnest of the profound admiration, which in common with all the principals of the University, I entertain for his transcendent abilities and matchless scholarship, in their names and in my own name, in your behalf and in that of every member of the University by whom

learning is revered, and with whom genius is held sacred, I would tender for his acceptance, as a mark of our esteem and veneration, this ring; which I trust he will not disdain to wear upon his person, as a trophy of the conquest he has this day achieved, and in remembrance of the University he has vanquished. And that every member of the University may participate in this expression of our sentiments towards the Admirable Crichton, I have taken this public opportunity of their manifestation. Scholars of Paris, have I not your approval and concurrence?"

A thunder of applause succeeded the Rector's oration, and a thousand hurrahs responded to his appeal.

All eyes were now turned to Crichton, who, it was evident, only awaited a cessation of the clamour to address the assemblage in his turn. Silence was instantly commanded; and scarce a breath was drawn as he spoke, so intent were all upon catching each syllable that fell from his lips.

“ When the Phœnix of his age,” began Crichton, in a voice distinct and musical, “ and the favourite of the Muses, Picus of Mirandula, was proffered all the honours of the Roman School, he declined them, saying that he felt his own unworthiness, and that he had acquired more distinction than was his due in having obtained a hearing at their hands. In imitation of the conduct of this illustrious Prince, though with far less claim to the same honourable note, I would say that I neither deserve nor desire further distinction than I have gained. Fortune has already favoured me beyond my deserts. I have engaged in amicable strife with men whose intellectual superiority I am ready to acknowledge, and who, if I have worsted them in argument, have been foiled solely because I made a better choice of weapons, and happened to be the more skilful in their use. I am not blinded by self esteem ; I attribute not my victory to other than its right causes. Like most of the great events of life, its issue

may have been the result of chance, which has upon this occasion declared itself in my favour. Were the contest to be renewed on the morrow, I might be placed in the position of my opponents. Courtesy to a stranger, and consideration for his youth, may have restrained my adversaries from putting forth their strength. Some such feelings have, no doubt, had their influence. Grant, however, that I have triumphed—you have bestowed upon me your applause—I am fully requited. Trophies of victory which may be wrested from me as soon as won, are of little avail. Better men may appear — *Plures habet Sparta Brasidâ meliores*. My ambition has a hundred goals, which it would fain reach.

Magnum iter intendo, sed dat mihi gloria vires."

"Live Crichton! Live the Admirable Crichton — *Euge Optime! Euge! Euge!*" shouted the scholars.

Crichton gracefully saluted the assemblage and would have retired, had he not been withheld by the Rector.

“ You must perforce accept this gem,” said he ; “ the gifts of the University of Paris are not wont to be slighted,” and taking a brilliant diamond ring from his fore-finger, and loosening the velvet escarcelle from his sash, Messire Adrian D’Amboise presented them to Crichton.

“ I may not decline your offer,” said Crichton, reluctantly receiving the proffered gem “ since you thus press it upon me, though I feel how little I merit it. The ring I shall prize, but as to the contents of the purse, you must suffer me to dispose of them as I shall see fitting.”

“ The purse is yours, do with it what you think proper, Seigneur,” said the Rector.

Crichton removed the ring, and taking forth the crowns of gold with which the escarcelle was filled, threw them by handfuls amongst the crowd of scholars. A violent commotion ensued, during which many of the students broke through the lines and approached close to the persons of Crichton and the Rector. One of these, a youth, who for

some space had held his green mantle before his face, now rushed forward, and prostrating himself before Crichton, threw down a garland of twisted bay-leaves at his feet.

“Disdain not my offering, Signor Crichton,” said he, in a low and timid voice, “simple though it be, and all unworthy your acceptance. I will myself wind it round your brows if I receive your gracious permission to do so.”

“Retire, thou forward youth,” said the Rector, gravely, “this is presumption.”

“I pray you excuse him,” said Crichton, “the compliment is too flattering to be declined, and, let me add, the mode in which it is conveyed is too graceful to be unwelcome. I accept your wreath, young sir, and beg you to arise. But wherefore,” added he, with a smile, “did you imagine that I should come off victorious? Surely there was nothing to warrant such a conclusion. And had I returned ingloriously, this garland would have been wholly thrown away.”

The youth arose, and fixed his dark eyes full upon Crichton's countenance.

“Whatever the matchless Crichton shall undertake, in that he will excel all men,” said he. “Well hath he been surnamed the ‘*Admirable*.’ With him, to engage in a conflict is to obtain a victory. I was assured of his success.”

“Your looks are sincere; and I will not distrust your words,” replied Crichton. “Your face resembles one I have seen, though where I cannot call to mind. Are you of these colleges?”

“He is one of the Gelosi, Seigneur Crichton,” said Ogilvy, who, together with Caravaja and the Sorbonist, had forced himself into the vicinity of Crichton. “Be not deceived by his honest look, as I have been. Hence, youth, and take thy mummeries elsewhere.”

“One of the Gelosi!” exclaimed Crichton. “Ha! now I remember the features. 'Tis the youth I have seen so oft. But why avert thy

head, gentle boy? I have said nothing, I trust, to wound thy feelings?"

The Geloso appeared crimsoned with shame.

"Tell me," continued Crichton, "what may mean that masked figure whom I have seen for ever hovering nigh thee in thy walks? nay, that seems like thy shadow at the hôtel de Bourbon. Is it a device of thine own to attract curiosity, young sir? If so, I can tell thee thou hast succeeded. Even the Royal Henri has noticed the singularity of the figure."

"Have you, likewise, remarked that mask, signor?" replied the Geloso, with an expression of uneasiness almost amounting to terror. "I know not who it is, or what it may mean. I have often thought it was a trick of mine own imagination that conjured up this phantom. But you have seen it, likewise!"

"I have!" replied Crichton; "but methinks the answer you have given is somewhat evasive. I thought more of sincerity dwelt in

those earnest eyes. But who would look for candour in Your present action is but, I fear, an ~~artifice~~ to win attention."

Saying which, he turned from him. The Geloso attempted to reply, but retired abashed.

Ogilvy was about to thrust him back, but perceiving that the youth had shrouded his face within his mantle, and voluntarily withdrawn himself, he desisted.

There was something in the manner of the Venetian that struck Crichton; and his feelings reproached him with undue severity towards the youth. Laying his hand upon his shoulder, he addressed a few words to him in a more kindly tone.

The Geloso raised his eyes. The black orbs were filled with tears. He looked with a blinded gaze on Crichton, and thence at the hand, which he still suffered to remain upon his shoulder.—Suddenly he started.—He pressed his hand across his eyes.—He cleared his vision from its tears.—He pointed to Crichton's finger.

“The ring!” exclaimed he. “Did you not place it there?”

Surprised at the youth’s emotion, and at the enquiry, Crichton looked at the finger upon which he had scarce a moment ago placed the gift of the Rector. The ring was wanting.

Unable to account for this extraordinary occurrence, and not without some suspicions of the Venetian himself, Crichton fixed a cold scrutinizing glance upon him. The Geloso shuddered slightly at the expression of his glance, but quailed not beneath it.

“He cannot have done it,” thought Crichton; “falsehood could not dwell in looks so guileless.”

At this instant there was a further rush amongst the scholars. Ogilvy and the Venetian were forcibly propelled against Crichton. A knife was seen to glitter in the air. From its position it seemed to be grasped by the hand of Ogilvy. For an instant the steel was suspended over the head of Crichton. The Geloso saw it. Uttering a loud cry of

warning, he threw himself in the way of the blow. The blade descended. The arms of the Venetian were entwined round Crichton's neck. In an instant he found himself deluged in blood.

With Crichton to draw his sword—to turn—to sustain the almost exanimate body of the Geloso was the work of an instant.

“This is the assassin!” shouted he; and with the hand that was still at liberty, and with a force that seemed almost superhuman, he grasped the throat of the paralysed Ogilvy.

CHAPTER IV.

AN ENGLISH BULL-DOG.

I am the fellow with the great shoulders—and he my dog.—*Henry IVth.* (Second Part).

As sure a dog as ever fought at head.—*Titus Andronicus.*

A CRY arose amongst the scholars that Crichton had been assassinated, and such was the confusion that prevailed in his vicinity, that for some space, the truth or falsehood of the report could not be ascertained.

The crowd was fearfully incensed. They demanded that the assassin should be given up to their vengeance. Yelling, groaning, uttering threats and imprecations, they pressed forward—at the sides, in front, in all directions. The archers stationed as a foot-guard

around the doctors and professors, were incontinently carried off their legs. The principals of the colleges immediately beat a retreat, and betook themselves for refuge to the hall of the institution they had so recently quitted. Affairs assumed a very ominous aspect. Bludgeons were waved in the air; blows were dealt indiscriminately, and many a pretended random stroke wiped off old scores with some rigid disciplinarian who had not been sufficiently alert to effect his escape. In vain did the Rector strive to check this rising storm. His voice, wont to be listened to with awe, was unheard or unheeded amid the tumult.

“*Los aux Ecoles!*” shouted the scholars, pressing forward.

“*Los aux Ecoles!*” cried Chicot, who, safely ensconced within the gateway, eyed the raging mob at a distance, “I never hear that cry, but I think of the screaming of a pack of gulls, before a tempest. Mischievous is sure to be brewing.”

“ Their cursed croaking resembles that of the frogs in Aristophanes,” said Ronsard—
“ would it might end in crocitation! I prophesied ill from the moment I beheld this rabble.”

“ I trust you will rather approve yourself *Vates* in its poetic, than its prophetic sense,” replied Brantôme. “ I own my mind somewhat misgives me.”

“ Methinks, my Lord,” said René de Villequier to the Rector, “ it were well to nip this rebellion in the bud. Some lives may else be lost. See—they approach the assassin—they seize him—they drag him from the grasp of Crichton. Mort-dieu! my Lord, they will tear him in pieces—this must be prevented, we must not stand by and see murder like this committed.”

“ The butchers!” shouted Joyeuse, “ Crichton himself will be endangered. By my halidom! I will bring down my archers upon them!—”

“ Stay, my Lord, an instant, I implore

of you," said the Rector, "my presence will restrain their violence. I will amongst them myself—they dare not disobey my mandates."

And accompanied by the Grand Master of the College of Navarre, the Rector forced his way towards the principal scene of strife.

"Give them this further chance," said D'Épernon to the Vicomte, who was chafing like a high mettled steed, with impatience. "If they heed not their Rector then—"

"*Los aux Ecoles,*" replied Chicôt, with a laugh. "We shall have a pleasant specimen of their chivalry anon. By my marotte, they are in no mood to listen to a dissertation now.

"'Tis a waste of time," cried Joyeuse, "forbearance is thrown away; even majesty is not held sacred by these felon scholars. How can their Rector expect obedience from them? To my side, Larchant—*en avant!*" Drawing his sword, and attended by the Captain of the Guard, the Vicomte flung himself headlong into the press.

Intelligence that Crichton was unhurt

somewhat abated the frenzy of the multitude. Still they were vehemently excited. Ogilvy had been dragged from Crichton's grasp, and was threatened with instant immolation. Deprived of utterance by the choaking gripe of Crichton, from which he had only been delivered to encounter a fate more terrible, stunned by the buffets of the students, it was only in this perilous extremity that he recovered his power of speech. With a force that could only have been given him by despair, he burst from their hold and shouted to Crichton for aid. He was instantly retaken, and his cries drowned by a roar of mockery from the ruthless mob.

“ Call on Crichton for protection!” shouted Caravaja, who had been a prominent instrument in assailing the unfortunate Scot, and who indulged in a savage rejoicing at his situation. “ As well might the serpent sue for protection to the heel it hath bitten, as thou implore succour from him thou wouldst have slain. But thy countryman,

thou seest, turns a deaf ear to thy plaints—
ha! ha!”

“Surely mine ears deceived me,” said Crichton, who with his broidered kerchief had busied himself in staunching the wound of the Geloso, and who had only caught this latter exclamation of the Spaniard. “Can it be that the assassin is countryman of mine?”

“’Tis even so, Señor Crichton,” replied Caravaja. “To his eternal infamy be it spoken.”

“Hear me, noble Crichton!” shouted Ogilvy, whom the Spaniard vainly endeavoured to silence. “Think me not guilty of this foul offence. I care not for death, but I would not die dishonoured. I would not perish charged with a deed which my soul abhorreth. I am no assassin. I am Jasper Ogilvy of Balfour.”

“Hold!” exclaimed Crichton, consigning his yet inanimate burthen to the care of a bystander, and pressing towards Ogilvy, “let me

“speak with this man. Give me some token that I may know thou art he whom thou callest thyself. Thy voice brings back by-gone days ; but I can discern nought of Jasper Ogilvy in those blood-stained features.”

“ You would not know my visage, were it freed from its stain,” returned Ogilvy. “ We both have grown to manhood since we met ; but you will call to mind a moonlight cruise upon the lake of Cluny, years ago, when a life was saved from perishing beneath its waters. To me the recollection of that deed hath been ever sweet ; to day, it hath been a proud one.—No matter ; let me establish my truth with you, honoured Sir, and these hell-hounds may do their worst.”

“ You have said enough ; I am satisfied, more than satisfied, replied Crichton. “ Messieurs, release this Gentleman. He is wholly guiltless of the crime laid to his charge. I will answer for him with my life.”

The scholars replied with a laugh of incre-

dulity. "We have only his bare word for his innocence," replied the Bernardin. "Appearances are sadly against him."

"This knife was within his vest, when we dragged him from the Señor Crichton," added Caravaja, holding up an ensanguined blade. "Por los Revelaciones de San Juan! this, methinks, is proof unanswerable."

A volley of execrations answered this appeal to the passions of the multitude.

"Thou liest," cried Ogilvy, struggling to set free his hands; "that poignard is thine own; *my* dirk hangs at my girdle—would it were now within my grasp!"

"Produce the weapon, then," said Caravaja. And he thrust his hand into the Scot's torn doublet. "Ha!" exclaimed he suddenly, "what have I found! Por nuestra Señora! 'tis the diamond ring, with the cipher of the University. He is a robber as well as an assassin."

A sudden light seemed to break upon Crichton.

“ There is some mystery here,” cried he. “ Let the accuser and the accused both be brought before the Rector.”

A murmur arose amongst the scholars. “ He would shield his countryman,” they cried ; “ *we* are satisfied of his guilt.”

“ But ye are not to constitute yourselves his judges,” replied Crichton, sternly. “ Deliver him to the proper authorities ; let that Spaniard who stands forth his accuser, be secured ; and I am satisfied.”

“ Mighty well !” returned Caravaja, “ All I get for my exertions in seizing the assassin, is to be accused of the crime myself. ’Tis well. But if you are so readily gulled by your countryman’s subterfuge, Señor Crichton, *my* comrades are not so easily imposed upon. Hijo di Dios ! they know me too well to suspect me of any such enormity.”

“ The scholars of Paris are apt to take the law into their own hands upon occasions like the present, where the guilt of the offender is manifestly established,” said the Sorbonist.

“ It is the part of their privileges to adjudicate their own causes, and they are always willing to abide by the consequences of their own decisions. We have sentenced this man to run the gauntlet of the schools, and he shall not escape. Why delay we, comrades ?”

“ Ay, wherefore ?” added Caravaja.

“ Beware,” shouted Crichton, in a voice of thunder, “ how you proceed to further acts of violence. My respect for your University has thus long withheld me ; but I will not stand by and see outrage committed.”

“ I am with you, Master Crichton,” said the English student, Simon Blount, advancing towards him, and still followed by his huge bull-dog, whose breadth of chest, short limbs, and bluff visage, greatly resembled his own square proportions, bow legs, and burly physiognomy. “ Your countryman shall suffer no wrong, while I have a staff to wield, or a blade to draw in his defence. And as to the merits of his case, I have as little doubt of his innocence, as I have assurance of yon cut-

throat Spaniard's guilt. But in any case, he shall not be put to death without judge or jury. What, ho! Druid," added he, glancing significantly at his enormous dog, "it will be time to slip thy muzzle in case these curs show their teeth."

At this conjuncture, the Rector and the Doctor Launoi made their appearance.

"Hear me, my children," said the Rector, in a loud voice, "justice shall be dealt upon this Scot. Deliver him into the custody of the sergeant of the guard now in attendance upon me. I pledge myself to the instant examination of his case. What more can you require? By your threatened violence, you will only add one crime to another, and increase the scandal you have already occasioned to the University, in the esteem of its illustrious visitants."

Crichton conferred an instant with the Rector, who apparently acquiesced in the propriety of the suggestion made to him.

"Disperse at once, and let each man seek

his respective college," continued Adrian D'Amboise, with some severity. "Sergeant, advance, and seize upon the persons of Jasper Ogilvy, of the Ecosais, and Diego Caravaja of Narbonne. Messieurs Scholars, give him your aid. Ah! do you hesitate?—is it possible that you venture to disobey the paternal injunctions of the Father of the University—what frenzy is this?"

A sullen murmur ran through the battalion of the scholars; and such was their threatening aspect, that the sergeant of the guard hesitated to obey the commands of the Rector.

"Why should we respect his mandates?" muttered the Sorbonist. "'Tis plain we are but lightly considered at his paternal hands. Let the *Father* of the University tell us why his *children* were excluded from the disputation this morning, and we will then perpend the propriety of compliance with his request."

"Ay, let him answer that," said the Bernardin.

“ ’Twould shrewdly perplex him to do so,” returned Caravaja. “ By the perdition of the world, I will surrender myself to no man living, sergeant or Rector, Scot or Englishman; and to show them how little I regard their threats, if no other can be found to smite this starveling bravo, my hand shall deal the first blow.”

Caravaja raised his knife with the intent to strike. At that instant, however, he was seized by a nervous grasp, and hurled forcibly backwards with such force, that, muttering an inarticulate oath, he fell heavily to the ground. Crichton, for it was by his hand that the Spaniard had been prostrated, threw himself amongst the ranks of the scholars with such irresistible force, that their united efforts were unable to withstand him. Shaking off Ogilvy’s captors, he placed a poignard within his grasp, and, drawing his own sword, calmly awaited the further assault of the students.

Rugged and resolute, and, withal, savage if aroused, as the bull-dog at his heels, Blount

followed closely in his rear. Confining himself to the warding off a few blows, aimed at Crichton, he at first dealt none in return; but he could not long act upon the defensive. A rude buffet on the head aroused all his ire. He then laid about him in right earnest, and with such good will and determination, that an opponent dropped for every blow of his cudgel, which, in passing, we may remark, was not a vine-wood staff, but a huge English crab-stick, seasoned, knotty, and substantial, almost as the bearer's self. The might of twenty threshers seemed to reside in Blount's single arm. Sconces were cracked by him with as much ease as a boy for pastime would beat in pieces as many gourds. The Sorbonist ventured to oppose his estoc against the Englishman's club. Our sophister, however, had now a more difficult thesis to maintain than any he had hitherto defended. His postulate was effectually blanked by Blount's knotty rejoinder. Yielding to the weighty blow, the supple vine-staff fled from his grasp, spinning

through the air to a considerable distance, while the arm that sustained it, shattered by the stroke, sank powerless to his side.

Meantime Ogilvy and Crichton were not left unmolested. Placed back to back, both stood in postures of defence.

Uttering frightful yells, and brandishing their staves, the scholars furiously commenced the assault. Blows thick as hail were showered against Crichton's person. His sword glanced around him like a stream of light. He appeared invulnerable. Not a blow took effect. Caravaja, who had regained his feet, was amongst the foremost of his assailants. "By St. James of Compostella!" roared he, "I will wash out in his blood, the stain he hath put on our Academies, and on myself. Give way; look to thyself, proud Scot." And pressing forward, he made a desperate thrust at Crichton.

Caravaja was no contemptible swordsman; but he had to do with an antagonist unequalled in the art of self-defence. His thrust

was parried with infinite dexterity, and after the exchange of a few fierce and rapid passes, his long Toledo was wrenched from his grasp, and he lay at the mercy of his adversary. Crichton, however, forbore to strike; but dismissed his foe as one unworthy of his steel. Gnashing his teeth with rage, Caravaja sought a new weapon; and encouraging each other by shouts and cries, the scholars still pressed madly on.

One amongst their number, of colossal stature, noted amongst his brethren for his extraordinary athletic feats, and rejoicing in the Rabelaisian *sobriquet* of Loupgarou, (which the reader of the *Faits et Dits du Géant Gargantua et de son Fils* may remember as the name of the vasty chieftain, against whom the good Pantagruel so valiantly demeaned himself), wielding not a wooden staff but a bar of iron, advanced deliberately towards him. Watching his opportunity when Crichton was engaged on all sides, he discharged a tremendous blow full at his head.

The ponderous weapon descended, but Crichton had foreseen the stroke and averted it, not, however, without some loss. Such was the force of the blow, that his sword blade, though of the best tempered steel, was shivered at the hilt.

It was now that Crichton's great personal strength, and remarkable activity in its display, stood him in admirable stead. Without allowing his gigantic antagonist time to repeat his blow, he sprang forward and grappled him with an energy that shook his Herculean frame to its foundation. The Antæus of the Schools reeled. For the first time he had met with his match. Locked in Crichton's cramping gripe, Loupgarou could neither disentangle his right arm, nor bring his unwieldy powers into play. He could scarcely even draw breath. His brawny chest heaved like a labouring mountain. Exhausting himself in ill-directed attempts at liberation, he floundered like a whale when assailed by the sea-unicorn.

Confident of the result of the strife, and unwilling to deprive their champion of the entire honours of conquest, the scholars suspended further hostilities against Crichton, and directed their attacks upon Ogilvy and Blount. Abandoned by his comrades, Loupgarou was ashamed to roar for aid ; and experienced some such qualms as fell to the share of his namesake, when struggling within the clutch of the redoubted Pantagruel. Like a tower that has been shaken from its equilibrium by the blast of the miner, he was observed to totter on his base, and, with a concussion heard above the din of the fray, he fell to the ground, deprived of sense and motion.

Snatching the bar from the relaxed grasp of his adversary, Crichton was about to rejoice his comrades, when his attention was suddenly drawn to a new quarter. Hearing his own name called upon, as he thought, by the voice of the Geloso, followed by a loud shriek for

help, he strove to force his way in the direction of the sound.

Ogilvy meantime found an unexpected and most efficient ally in the shape of the Englishman's dog, Druid. Galled by the fierce and pertinacious assaults of his enemies, Blount suddenly slipped the muzzle of the savage animal, and giving him encouragement by voice and gesture speedily created a diversion in their favour.

First was heard the sullen growl, deepening to an awful roar, of the furious brute. His enormous lips curled upwards—his brow became corrugated with a thousand folds of wrinkled skin—his eyes glared—his fangs glistened. He rushed at the scholars. Blount directed his attacks, and cheered him on. Blows availed nothing against the tough hide of the hardy creature, and served only to incense him. He raged amongst them like a wolf in a lamb-pasture.

The scene was terrible, yet not untinged

by the ludicrous. Fain would the students have taken to their heels, but retreat was impossible. Those behind pushed forward the ranks in front. Shrieks and execrations evidenced the devastation of the relentless pursuer. His teeth met in the legs of one, in the arms of another, in the throat of a third. "The devil is let loose amongst us, in the shape of a hound!" cried the Scholars. "Avoid thee, Sathanas!—*vade retro!*" But Druid was insensible to conjuration or entreaty. Shaking his huge jowl, and displaying anew his formidable fangs, he prepared himself for fresh exhibitions of his prowess.

A space was now cleared around Blount and Ogilvy by their staunch partisan. With his back on the ground—his face shielded by his hands to protect himself from the teeth of the dog, by whom he had been pinned to the earth, lay the prostrate form of the Bernardin. Planting his heavy paws upon his neck, and sprawling over the body of the half-dead

scholar, Druid upturned his glowing eyeballs to his master, as if to enquire whether or not he should complete his work of destruction. It was a critical moment for the Bernardin.

Just then, however, the clatter of swords, the trampling of steeds, and shouts of "Joyeuse, to the rescue!" announced that the Vicomte had reached his company of archers. With a swoop like that of an eagle upon a flock of meaner fowl—and with his charger rearing into the air, Joyeuse dashed amongst the multitude.

On the other hand came the halberdiers of the Rector and the lacqueys of René de Villequier with bills and partisans; and, furthermore, the crowd was invested to the right by the well-disciplined ordinaries of the Scottish guard, under the command of the Baron D'Épernon. Thus menaced on all sides, the scholars found themselves in an awkward predicament. At first there was a murmur of "Down with the minions!—Down with the

Scottish *coupejarrets!*” but these cries were speedily silenced. A few strokes from the blunt edges of the swords of the guardsmen, and their staves were thrown to the ground in token of submission.

CHAPTER V.

THE ASTROLOGER.

Icy pres, dist Epistemon, demoure Her Trippa, vous sçavez comment par art d'Astrologie, Geomantie, Chiro-mantie, et aultres de pareille farine il predict toutes choses futures ; conferons de vostre affaire avec lui. De cela, respondi Panurge, je ne sçay rien.—RABELAIS. *Pantagruel Liv. III.*

THE by-stander to whom Crichton committed the inanimate Geloso, when he rushed to the assistance of Ogilvy, received his charge with an eager readiness, that almost appeared as if he had anticipated the event. Shielding his burthen with his arms, and unwilling, it would seem, to attract further attention, he endeavoured to extricate himself from the crowd.

He was a little old man, of singular and

inauspicious appearance, dressed in a flowing robe of black taffata, lined with flame-coloured silk, and edged with sable fur. In lieu of doublet and hose, he wore a rich gown of crimson velvet, fastened round the waist with a silken cord, in the which was stuck a costly purse, embroidered with the arms of Catherine de Medicis. A collar of medallions, graven with cabalistic characters, hung over his shoulder, and upon his head he wore a small scull-cap of purple velvet. He bore neither arms nor device of any sort beyond the blazon of the Queen-Mother. His forehead would have appeared venerable from its height, baldness, and innumerable wrinkles, had not his black scowling brows given it a sinister and portentous look. His temples were hollow and sunken; his cheeks emaciated; the colour of his skin was sallow and jaundiced, and its texture like that of shrivelled parchment. Over his eyes, which otherwise possessed a strange and supernatural lustre, was drawn a sort of film, which seemed to

shade them, like those of the eagle, from the garish light of day. His glances were sly and furtive; his nose was high and aquiline, tufted between the eyes with a clump of dusky hair; the whole expression of his features was crafty, suspicious, malignant. When erect, his stature might have been lofty, but his height was now dwindled to insignificance, by his stooping shoulders and contracted spine. His distorted limbs were concealed from view by the ample folds of his drapery; but his joints had been wrenched from their sockets, and but ill restored, during his confinement in the Bastille, where he had been incarcerated and tortured for supposed practices of sorcery, during the reign of Charles IX.

Cosmo Ruggieri, the forbidding personage we have described,—by birth a Florentine, by vocation a mathematician, alchemist, nay, even bard, as we gather from the *Anagramatographie* of Nicholas Clément Tréleau, Secretary to the Duc D'Anjou, wherein its author eulogises him as *Florentinum, mathematicum,*

et poetam lectissimum ; and thus dedicates to him his strains :—

*Musarum delubra colens Musis ego sacror,
Et Jovis et Phœbi vivo sub auspicio.*

—officiated as chief astrologer to Catherine de Medicis, by whom he was brought to Paris, and whose favour he enjoyed. It was to her influence that he owed his deliverance from the rack and the dungeon ; his escape with life ; his subsequent advancement to court favour under her third son Henri, for whose accession to the throne, it was said, indeed, he had paved the way by the removal of his brothers, Francis II. and Charles IX. and by whom, latitudinarian and heretical, if not wholly heathenish and abominable as his tenets were known to be, he was advanced to the ecclesiastical dignity of Abbé of Saint Mahé, in Brittany. It was to the protection of her powerful arm that, although surrounded by open and secret foes, he was enabled to pursue his mysterious career unmolested ;—and it was to her he was indebted for the

wonderful state information which he possessed.

In return for these obligations, the stars were nightly consulted for the Queen-Mother (a queen who boasted that she ruled by the hands of her sons), and on all emergencies Catherine had recourse to his counsel. Ruggieri was blindly devoted to her will, and mainly instrumental in the execution of her hidden projects and machinations. Darker imputations were laid to his charge. All the unholy practices to which the superstition of the age attached credence were attributed to him. He was said to be deeply versed in necromantic lore; to be addicted to witchcraft and idolatry; to preside at the wizards' sabbaths; to traffic in the charnel merchandize of Montfaucon; and, lastly, to feast upon the flesh of still-born infants.

Ruggieri, however, did not stand alone. To such an extent did the practice of judicial astrology prevail in this and the preceding reign, that the number of professors in that

occult science was estimated at thirty thousand, a calculation almost incredible, if we take into consideration the number of dupes necessarily required for their support.

Be this as it may, Ruggieri flourished. But then it was whispered, that he had another and more terrible source of lucre. The slow and subtle poisons of Florentine origin, whose treacherous effect was manifested in the gradual decay of the victim, were said to be brewed by him. The blood that nightly bathed the couch of Charles IX. was supposed to be the consequence of one of these diabolical potions. The monarch died, and Ruggieri had an enemy the less. But such was the dread entertained of his villainous drugs, that a cup of wine would have fallen from the grasp of the boldest Bacchanal, had it been thought to be medicated by Cosmo Ruggieri.

By the side of this redoubted magician was a dumb African slave of the most diminutive size and fantastic configuration, who had the reputation of being his familiar. Had he at all

resembled his master, this goblin page might have been deemed his shadow, so completely did he track his footsteps ; but strange as was the appearance of the sorcerer, that of his page was many degrees more grotesque. Hideously deformed and hunchbacked, Elberich (for so was the creature named) was so short in comparison with his width and girth, that, when moving, his squat rotundity of figure looked like a rolling ball of soot, in which, in place of eyes, two flaming carbuncles had been set ; when motionless, he appeared like a black, bloated baboon, perched on its nether end. His huge feet were visible ; but of his legs no traces could be detected. The machinery by which he moved was concealed. His arms were short and lean ; his hands, lank and webbed as the lateral fins of a seal.

Aided by his dwarf, from whose contact all recoiled with disgust, Ruggieri had but little difficulty in making good his retreat ; and having gained the shelter of a flying buttress

of the college wall, in the angle of which he was secure from interruption and annoyance, he turned his attention to the restoration of his charge. The wound, which appeared to have glanced down the shoulder, had been partially staunched by Crichton. The handkerchief was around the arm. The hurt did not appear a serious one, and Ruggieri had recourse to certain restoratives of the suspended animal functions, which, ever mindful of the character he assumed, he fortunately carried about his person.

As he removed the black and clustering ringlets, fallen in disorder over the features of the Geloso, Ruggieri could not help being struck by their exceeding loveliness. The cheek had indeed lost the warm suffusion that, like a glow of sunshine on a snowy peak, had lit up its bright southern complexion—the mellow olive hue had congealed into marble whiteness; but the face was not less beautiful. It was the difference merely between a statue and a breathing thing: and Ruggieri perused the

lineaments of the statue with something of the rapturous earnestness of a virtuoso. He peered into every line with increasing wonder. It was not so much the harmony and regularity of the youth's features that struck the astrologer with astonishment—as the softness and smoothness of the skin—the polished whiteness of the throat, on which the azure veins were traced like wandering threads. These were what chiefly excited his admiration. He became lost in thought, and grew so much absorbed in contemplation of the Geloso's countenance, that he wholly neglected to apply the phial of pungent spirit, which he held extended for that purpose in his grasp.

Throwing back the hair as far as it would admit, Ruggieri examined more narrowly the snowy forehead of the Geloso; thence his glance wandered to the face with renewed surprise. The eyes were closed; but the dark orbs could almost be seen through the lucid lids. Then, those long silken lashes—that

dark and pencilled brow—those nostrils, fine and thin—those lips so delicately carved ! The astrologer was lost in amazement ; he took the small white hand that hung listlessly at the youth's side ; he opened it, and intently perused its lines. A shade came over his own countenance, as he pursued his study. He passed his hand over his brow : a sudden emotion shook his frame.

“ Spirit of Sambethe ! ” exclaimed he, “ can this be ? Can I have been so long in error ? Can the heavenly influences have so long deceived their votary ?—Impossible ! True, the planets have of late assumed evil and malevolent aspects—menacing me with ill. Saturn hath rule within the Chamber of Death. The Lord of the Third House was combust and retrograde within the Eleventh, presaging peril from the hand of a stranger. This day, this hour, is pregnant with calamity. I foresaw my danger, but I foresaw likewise the means whereby it might be averted. Within my path stands Crichton. He is the

foe by whom I am threatened. This day links his fate with mine, and with that of another. That other is my safeguard—that other is within my arms. One of us must perish. A thick curtain hangs between me and the event. Curses on my own imperfect skill, which will only enable me to see so far and no farther. But I may ward off the stroke.”

And he again returned to his scrutiny of the Geloso's countenance.

“Wherefore is it,” continued he, musing, “that as I gaze upon these beautiful yet death-like features, a thousand forgotten fancies should be awakened within my bosom? That face, though lovelier far, recalls to me the image of one long since buried in oblivion, unheard, unthought of, swallowed within the womb of time — it recalls to me dreams of youth, of passion, fever, delirium; of a deed of which I will not even think. Who is this youth? or rather, unless mine eyes are wholly sightless, or dim to aught save the midnight glories of the heavens, who is this——”

The reverie of the Astrologer was interrupted by a slight convulsive attempt at respiration on the part of the Geloso. Ruggièri applied the phial, and, with a trembling hand, proceeded to unclasp the youth's doublet to give him greater freedom in breathing. In removing the folds of the blood-stained linen, the heaving bosom of a young and lovely female was revealed to his view. His eye glistened through its film.

“ 'Tis as I suspected,” muttered the Astrologer, “ a girl in masquerade attire. Most probably the fool hath lost her heart to Crichton—if so she will be a useful agent. I have need of such a one in my designs upon him. Ha! what have we here?—an amulet—no, by Paracelsus, a small key of gold, of antique fashioning, attached to a chain of the same metal, which, from its exquisite workmanship, I judge to be of Venice. Ah, fair maiden, I have here, no doubt, a clue to your history, of which I may avail myself hereafter! By your leave, this key is mine.”

And little scrupulous as to the means of accomplishing any object he might have in view, Ruggieri without hesitation, unfastened the chain, and was about to commit it to the custody of his pouch, when he was alarmed by a monitory signal from his sable attendant.

The sound uttered by the dwarf resembled the hissing of a startled snake. Indeed, the vocal powers of the wretched creature only ranged between gibbering and sibilation; by the former, he expressed his rejoicing, by the latter his fears. The Astrologer well knew how to interpret the present boding noise. Following the direction of the dwarf's red and glowing orbs, he caught sight of a figure, upon which the angry mannikin was glowering, puffing, and spitting like an owl disturbed by some prowling specimen of the furry tribe. The figure was masked, and muffled within the folds of a large sable cloak; and ere Ruggieri could thrust the chain of gold into his girdle, the intruder was by his side.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MASK.

Don Garcia.—Qu'est-ce alors
Que ce Masque?—Tenez, le voilà.—VICTOR HUGO. *Hernani.*

THE Astrologer could not conceal his uneasiness; he eyed the Mask with suspicion, not unmingled with fear.

“Be not alarmed, father,” said the figure, addressing Ruggieri, “I am a friend.”

“What assurance have I of that?” returned the Astrologer doubtfully, “Your speech I own is fair, but your guise and deportment are not calculated to inspire confidence. We are not now in Venice, Signor Maschera; neither is this the season of Carnival. Your garb will not pass current here, as in our ultra-montane

capitals. The good citizens of Paris deem the mask but an indifferent excuse for intrusion; and I have been long enough amongst them to acquire some of their foolish notions on this head. Your pardon, Signor, if I misconceive you. Much treachery has made me habitually cautious—perhaps distrustful.”

“ You are in the right to be so, good father,” replied the Mask, “ caution becomes your years and character; yet, methinks, the science you profess should enable you to discover a friend from an enemy.”

“ I read not men’s looks beneath a vizard, my son,” replied Ruggieri, “ that were, indeed, to see through a glass darkly. Who, blindfold, could consult the stars! Give me to behold your features, and I will tell you whether or not you are what you represent yourself.”

“ You wrong me by your doubts, father,” replied the Mask—“ I repeat, I am a friend—that I am well known to you, you shall have ample assurance presently; and that I have

some claim to the service I am about to require at your hands, you will then, I doubt not, admit; meantime, as secrecy is my object, and as the disclosure of my features, or even of my name, would only be attended with risk, you will perhaps suffer me to preserve my incognito."

"Assuredly, my son," replied Ruggieri, who had now regained his confidence, "I have no desire to penetrate your mystery. Were it an object with me, I could readily gain information. He must walk closely masked who would elude the scrutiny of Cosmo Ruggieri. But to the point, this youth"—(for Ruggieri had hastily arranged the disordered attire of the Venetian damsel) "claims my attention—what do you require of me?"

"Before we proceed," returned the Mask, "I pray you, father, to accept this purse as an earnest of my sincerity: it will give you a clearer insight to my character than even the display of my physiognomy might do." Saying which he thrust a well-lined purse into

the hands of the Astrologer, who received it, nothing reluctant.

“ You have said well, my son,” returned he—“ this is a medium, through which I clearly distinguish the false from the true friend. The countenance may beguile, but there is nothing simulate in this,” continued he, telling the broad pieces in his hand, while he resigned his burthen to the dwarf Elberich, “ How can I assist you? Whatsoever comes within the scope of my art is yours to command.”

“ In a word, then,” returned the Mask, “ I love—”

“ Ah! I understand,” replied Ruggieri, significantly, “ you love without requital.”

“ You have said it, father.”

“ And would subdue the heart of her for whom you sigh. Is it not so, my son?”

“ Even so, father,”

“ Doubt not its accomplishment. Be she chilly as Caucasian snow, I will engage to create a flame within her bosom shall burn

with an ardour fiercer than that created by the cestus of Venus."

"Swear to me, father, you will do this."

"By Orimasis! she shall be yours."

"Enough—I am content."

"Give me the damsel's name, her dwelling—?"

"Neither are needed—she is here." And the Mask pointed to the Venetian girl.

"Jabamiah!" exclaimed the surprised Astrologer—"this youth—this—"

"Nay, I know all," replied the Mask.—
"Plead not ignorance.—I witnessed the discovery you made."

"And—and you love her ——."

"Love her!" echoed the Mask—"Hear me, father," continued he with impetuosity. "You, who are of that fiery land, need not be told with what fierceness we Italians love.—With all the ardour of overwhelming passion I pursued this damsel. She was deaf to my prayers, my vows, entreaties. In vain I used every blandishment, every artifice—in vain

lavished gifts upon her that might have won a princess—all my efforts were ineffectual—for me she had no heart, no smile, no love. Nay, more, the fury of my suit affrighted her. Indifference grew to fear, and fear to hate.—She hated me. Hate, in some bosoms, is akin to love, but not in hers. It was (shall I confess so much?) a loathing of me. She repelled all my advances, avoided my presence, fled my sight. Stung by resentment, urged on by disappointed passion, I formed plans that, had they not been foiled in their execution, must have placed her within my power. By some means she became acquainted with my projects, and sought safety in flight. Her disappearance added to my torture—I was frantic. While plunged in this despair, I received intelligence that she had flown to Paris. Thither I repaired — traced her — saw through her disguise — hovered round her dwelling—haunted her like her shadow, in the hope that chance would, in the end, befriend me; it *has* befriended me

when least expected. — The moment has arrived—she has fallen into your power—no further obstacle exists—she is *mine*.”

And the Mask would have seized upon the inanimate girl, had he not been withheld by the Astrologer.

“ One obstacle yet exists, my son,” said Ruggieri, coldly ; “ you have a rival.”

“ A rival !” echoed the Mask.

“ A formidable one.”

“ Name him !”

“ For whom did she wreath that garland ?
—For whom endanger her life ?”

“ Ha !”

“ For Crichton !” —

“ Perdition seize him ! That *she* loves *him* is clear ; but he loves her not—knows her not—nor shall he know her—they must meet no more. But we lose time, father ; yield me that maid.”

“ Take back your purse, Signor,” replied Ruggieri, firmly ; “ I cannot aid you in this matter.”

“How?” exclaimed the Mask—“Have I not your oath?”

“True; but I knew not what I swore.”

“’Tis binding nevertheless. That is, if aught be binding on a conscience supple as your own. What interest can *you* have in this maiden? Are your services already purchased by this accursed Crichton? or do you hope to make a better market with him?—If so ——”

“Put no further affront upon me, Signor Maschera,” returned Ruggieri. “I am not lightly aroused nor easily appeased, as you may learn, if you provoke my anger. I am no friend to Crichton—nor is this maiden aught to me. Beyond the accidental discovery of her sex, and what you yourself have told me, I am wholly ignorant in all relating to her:—but fate has given her to my protection, and to violence like yours I will never betray her. Shame to the grey hairs that deck my brows did I act otherwise. Take back your purse, Signor, and trouble me no longer.”

“ Away, thou hoary hypocrite,” exclaimed the Mask. “ Think not to impose upon one, who knows thee well as I do, by thy vile pretences. Why should I stoop to solicit when I can command? A word from me—a look—a signal, and thou art plunged within a dungeon—stretched upon a wheel, whence not even Catherine’s mighty arm can accomplish thy deliverance. Of all men living, Ruggieri, thou hast most cause of dread from *me*; but of all agents of iniquity, I have most need of *thee*, therefore thou art safe; but tremble if thou disobeyest me. My vengeance is swifter and more certain than thine own.”

“ Who, in the devil’s name, are you that talk thus?” enquired the Astrologer.

“ Were I the devil himself, I could not occasion you more disquietude than I should were I to reveal myself,” replied the Mask. “ Be satisfied, and seek to know no further of me.”

The haughty imperiousness of tone suddenly assumed by the Mask, was not without

its effect upon the Astrologer; but he struggled to maintain a composed demeanour.

“What if I still refuse compliance?” demanded he.

“I denounce you,” continued the Mask, breathing the words hollowly in his ear, “of treasonable practices against the Monarch ’neath whose rule you live. Search the foul and inky depths of your soul, Ruggieri, and pluck forth its blackest secret. Bethink you of the proofs that might exist of your damnable offences, and of him who might become your accuser.”

“There lives but one who could thus accuse me,” groaned Ruggieri, “and he—”

“Stands by your side.”

“Impossible!” exclaimed Ruggieri, incredulously.

The Mask whispered in his ear. The Astrologer started and trembled from head to foot.

“I am content,” said he, after a pause. “Command me, noble Signor, as you see fitting. My life is at your disposal.”

“ I need not the sacrifice,” returned the Mask, scornfully. “ Deliver up the maiden. Yet stay, I am not unattended here. Hast thou no place of refuge, to which thou couldst convey this maid, where she might benefit by thy leach-like craft, would be secure from all observation of this Crichton, and where thou mightest put in practice the magical allurements of which thou hast made mention ?”

“ Signor, I have,” replied Ruggieri, after an instant’s reflection, and as if struck with a new idea, “ if it be your pleasure, I will convey her to the mystic tower, nigh the Hôtel de Soissons, whither alone her Majesty Catherine de Medicis and I have access. There shall she remain concealed, till I am acquainted with your further wishes.—But, can it be, that this damsel hath refused your suit ? Methinks she might have esteemed herself too highly honoured by your notice. By Orimasis there must be witchcraft in the case. You may be spell-bound, noble Signor. The Emperor Charlemagne was similarly

enslaved to a foul hag—and now I mind me of a strangely fashioned key, which I discovered upon her bosom. Perchance the charm resides in that. It may be a talisman of potent virtue. I will put it to the proof; in any case we must have a counter-enchantment, and I will substitute in its stead, a waxen image of your—”

“ As thou wilt,” interrupted the Mask, “ be that *thy* business. Ha ! she stirs—quick, we lose time.”

For some moments before it was remarked by the Astrologer and his companion, the return of animation had been perceptible in the Venetian girl. Heaving a deep sigh, she opened the lids of her large and languid eyes, and fixed their black orbs upon Ruggieri and Elberich ; the former of whom was bending over her, at the instant of her restoration to consciousness, (if the bewilderment she felt could be called consciousness), while the latter sustained her within his caitiff grasp. In this crouching posture, with his unbarred, yellow

arms twined around her person, the hideous dwarf resembled a messenger of Eblis sent to bear some beautiful soul to perdition. Fear took possession of the maiden as she glanced from one to the other. The objects before her looked like the visions of a dream. In vain did Ruggieri raise his finger to his lips; she neither comprehended her own situation, nor perceived necessity for silence. Just then her wandering gaze chanced upon the Mask, whose dusky form, supported by the buttress of the wall, and dilated by the gathering shadows of twilight, appeared almost gigantic. With a wild laugh, she pointed to the gloomy figure and muttered some incoherent ejaculations.

“ Away,” exclaimed the Mask, “ about it quick; why listen to her ravings? Remove her to the turret.”

“ That voice !” shrieked the maiden, starting to her feet, and spreading her hand before her eyes, “ It *is*—it *must* be he!—where am I?—ha—!”

“ Seize her,” vociferated the Mask.

“ He haunts me even while life is ebbing,” screamed the distracted girl; “ I am dying, yet cannot ’scape him. Save me from him, Crichton—save me.”

And with a wild scream she broke from the grasp of Ruggieri.

“ Gone!” shouted the Mask, ineffectually endeavouring to arrest her flight. “ Miscreants! you have let the snared bird loose. Ruggieri, you shall answer this with your life.”

“ The bird hath only fluttered forth,” returned the Astrologer—“ We yet may make it ours.”

It was at this crisis that the voice of the supposed Geloso reached the ears of Crichton. Like a frail bark tossed amidst troubled waters, the enfeebled maid strove against the tumultuous mob, who little heeded either her complaints or frantic ejaculations.

“ Poor youth!” cried one of the scholars.—“ his hurt hath turned his brain:—get

hence, foolish boy! Crichton hath his hands too full to give attention to thy shouts. He hath more need of help than thou hast. Dost see yon tall green plume?—Dost see the strife around it?—That plume is Crichton's. Be advised, and venture not where blows shower thick as hail, and where thou may'st come in for thy share of the tempest. Seek shelter in the rear."

The maid discerned the lofty figure of Crichton, as indicated by the student, involved amidst the throng; and at the same moment his eye alighted upon her struggling form. "It is the voice of the Geloso," he mentally ejaculated. "How comes he there unattended? To the rescue!—Ha!—Back, sirs, on your lives, I charge you.

"Save me, Crichton!" screamed the Venetian, "save me!"

A thick battalion of scholars opposed themselves to Crichton's progress.

"Stand aside!" vociferated he, nothing daunted by their numbers; and, whirling the

iron bar over his head, he dashed in the direction of the Venetian.

The damsel beheld him approach—she saw the scholars give way before his resistless efforts—she heard his shout of encouragement—and at the very instant when her bosom throbbed highest with hope, and when she almost deemed herself secure beneath his protecting arm, she felt her waist encircled by a sudden clasp.

She looked up—her eyes encountered two dark orbs flashing from the outlets of a sable mask. Her brain reeled ;—she saw no more.

Crichton meanwhile pressed fiercely forward. Fresh difficulties were thrown in his path—fresh ranks obstinately opposed themselves to his progress ; but all difficulties were at length overcome, and he reached the spot where he beheld the Geloso :—it was void. A roar of mockery from the students testified their satisfaction at his disappointment.

“ You have arrived too late to succour your preserver,” shouted a voice from out the

crowd ;—“ he is beyond your reach, and in the care of one who will not readily surrender him. Higados de Dios ! You are foiled, most puissant Caballero, nor shall it be *my* fault if you do not ever find a stumbling-block within your path. Bezo los manos, Señor.”

Turning towards the quarter whence the voice proceeded, Crichton beheld the retreating figure of Caravaja.

“ By my hopes of knightly worship,” murmured he, as he glanced fiercely round, “ I would give all the laurels I have this day won to have effected that poor youth’s deliverance from his foes. ’Tis plain from his cries, his looks of terror, and his sudden disappearance, that he hath been placed in fearful jeopardy. Curses upon these brawling scholars ! ’Twere a labour of Hercules to pursue the quest amidst a scene of such confusion ; and yet I would fain continue it did I see a chance of success. Why did Ruggieri, who so eagerly accepted the charge of this wounded boy, suffer him to incur such peril ? The old

Astrologer shall render me some explanation of his want of caution, or humanity.”

Crichton's further self-communion was cut short by the shouts of the archers and the trampling of their steeds. After a brief but ineffectual resistance, as we have before stated, the scholars threw down their arms, and, shouting for quarter, fled amain. Crichton was left alone. No sooner did the Vicomte de Joyeuse, who was careering among the crowd, ever and anon seizing a prisoner and delivering him to the custody of the guard, discern him, than he rein'd his charger by his side.

“Now Heaven and our Lady be praised,” exclaimed the Vicomte gaily, “that I find you unhurt, Seigneur Crichton. By my blazon, it had, indeed, been a blot upon the fair page of chivalry had its brightest mirror perished amid a rascal rout like this. Not a scratch but should have been paid for by a life. Tête-Dieu! if the Lord Rector reprove not his froward children, our sergeants shall

take the task from his hands, and give him a lesson in the art. But see, your page is at hand ; your courser snorteth for very joy to behold his lord. Ah, Crichton ! brave steed—fair page—both pledges of a royal lady's favour ;—you are twice fortunate !”

“Thrice fortunate, Joyeuse, in a brother-in-arms who flieth to my rescue in extremities like the present,” returned Crichton, in the same lively tone as his companion, vaulting at the same time into the saddle of a superb charger in richest housings, which was led towards him by a gallant-looking page, mounted upon a milk-white palfrey, and be-decked in doublet of white satin and velvet mantle of deepest azure, the colours as before remarked of Marguerite de Valois.—“Me-thinks,” added he, smiling, “this hard-fought field is at length our own—and yet, after en-acting more wonders than ever were achieved by the doughtiest champions of Romance—Tristan or Launfal, Huon or Parthenopex when struggling 'gainst the powers of sorcelrie

and darkness—it moveth me to tears to think in what light esteem my exploits will be held by preux chevaliers like to thyself, who think there is no honour to be won in such perilous conflicts. Trust me a legion of swarthy gnomes, with the fay Urganda at their head, were more easily vanquished than these disloyal varlets. I have now encountered this University alike in hall and field, disputed it with them by rule of rhetoric, and by rule of fence, and will freely admit to thee that I prefer the weapons of the principals to those of their disciples, and plume myself rather upon my conquest (if conquest it be) over these hard-headed, club-wielding Neophytes, whose stubborn brains were more difficult of convincement, than their renowned and learned seniors. But 'tis time to bestow a thought upon my luckless countryman, the original cause of all this scene of discord. Methinks I discern him and his staunch ally, amid the thickest turmoil. Forward, Joyeuse, I would speak with them.”

A few bounds of his steed brought Crichton to the spot where stood Ogilvy and Blount. The latter perceiving that the fray was at an end, called off his dog from the Bernardin, but finding that his intimation was not attended to by the stubborn animal, he seconded the hint with a heavy blow of his crab-stick, which produced the desired effect. Druid quitted his hold, and with a surly growl plumped down at his master's feet

“ We meet to-morrow, then, Ogilvy,” said Crichton, “ and such service as I can render shall be yours to command. Meantime you shall suffer no further molestation. Joyeuse, hath he your safeguard ?”

“ He has,” replied the Vicomte. “ By my halidom the brave Scot shall have a post amongst my company of archers, if he choose to barter his gown of grey serge for a jerkin of bright steel. He will not be the first of his countrymen who hath found the change to his advantage.”

“ I will reflect upon your offer, Seigneur,”

replied Ogilvy, with the characteristic caution of his nation—"meantime my best thanks are due to you for the proposal."

"As you please, sir," replied Joyeuse haughtily; "nor are your acknowledgements due to *me*, but to the Seigneur Crichton. To him alone you are indebted for my offer."

"He knows not what he declines, Joyeuse," returned Crichton.—"I will reason with him on the morrow. And now," continued he, "I would desire better acquaintance with your valiant comrade, who from his frame, his accent, and his dog, I judge to be of England."

"I *am* an Englishman," returned Blount, "but I deserve not the epithet you have applied to me. Had you bestowed it on my dog the term might not have been misapplied—on me 'tis wholly thrown away. Druid hath some pretensions to valour—he will never disgrace the soil from which he sprung—nor will his master, for that matter. But since you have honoured me with your

notice, worthy sir, let us join hands upon our new-struck friendship, if I be not too bold in assuming such a feeling on your part towards me, and you shall find, if you need them, that in Simon Blount and his dog, for I must not except Druid, who is part of myself, and indeed the best part, you will have two followers upon whose faith you may rely. *Audacter et fideliter* is my device."

"And a cordial and constant one it is," replied Crichton as he warmly returned the pressure of the Englishman's huge outstretched hand. "Gladly do I embrace your offer. Come to my hotel with Ogilvy on the morrow, and neglect not to bring with you my new and trusty follower."

"Doubt not that," returned Blount; "Druid and I are seldom apart."

Further conversation was interrupted by the sudden arrival of the Jester Chicot, who, contrary to his wont had an expression somewhat

serious upon his scoffing and derisive physiognomy.

“ Ah! my gay gossip,” said Crichton, “ why that portentous look? hast thou lost thy bauble in the fray?”

“ Far worse than that, brother droll,” returned Chicot, “ I have lost my reputation. Thou hast fairly won my cap and bells, and shall have them by pre-eminence of wisdom. But bend down thy lordly neck to me; I have somewhat for thy private hearing.”

And approaching Crichton, the Jester breathed his information in a low tone.

“ What!” exclaimed Crichton, who appeared struck with surprise at Chicot’s intelligence—“ art sure this Geloso is——?”

“ Hush!” muttered the Jester; “ who is now the fool? Would you betray her secret?”

“ And ’twas the Mask who seized her?” asked Crichton in a whisper. “ Whose features doth that vizard hide?”

“ I know not, “ replied Chicot—“ it may

be the Balafgré, or the Béarnais, or the Antichrist, for aught I can tell; but this I may assert, that it is neither my gossip, Henriot, nor thou, nor I, nor even the Seigneur Joyeuse; I will not say as much for our regal ghoul Catherine, whom perchance it *may* be."

"But Ruggieri, thou sayst—"

"Was with him. I beheld him and his dwarf Elberich. Both lent assistance to the Mask."

"Devils! This cursed Astrologer shall—"

"Have a care, gossip—Ruggieri is a loose friend—but a fast foe—beware of him. We never hob-a-nob together without my glass breaking, and the wine being spilt—a-hem!"

"He is gone, thou sayest?"

"Of a surety."

"I will seek him in his tower, and compel him to some explanation of this mystery of the Mask and maiden."

"That tower is the kennel of the she-wolf Catherine,—take heed what you do.

Many a hand has been thrust into a cage, the bearer whereof, would have gladly withdrawn it unscathed. But as you will; fools are leaders—wise men receders.”

“Gentlemen, adieu!” said Crichton; “remember our appointment of the morrow. Joyeuse, our rendezvous is at the fête to-night. —*Au revoir!*”

Saying which Crichton plunged his spurs into his horse’s sides, and, followed by his page, rode swiftly down the Montagne Saint-Généviève.

Chicot shrugged his shoulders.

“Knight-errantry is not wholly extinct, I perceive,” muttered he; “our gossip, Crichton, is born at least some half century too late; he should have flourished in the good old times of mine ancestor Triboulet, and his chivalrous master Francis the First. He is caught at once by the silken meshes of this dark hair’d syren. What will our fair mistress Margot say if this new adventure reach her

jealous ears?—But I must to the Louvre. This scholastic brawl will divert Henri's spleen. And as I descend this Parnassian steep of Saint G n v ve, to beguile the time, I'll invoke the Muse in behalf of

The Admirable Scot.

A SONG I'll write on
 Matchless Crichton ;
 In wit a bright one,
 Form, a slight one,
 Love, a light one!
 Who talketh Greek with us
 Like great Busbequius,
 Knoweth the Cabala.
 Well as Mirandola,
 Fate can reveal to us,
 Like wise Cornelius,
 Reasoneth like Socrates,
 Or old Xenocrates ;
 Whose system ethical,
 Sound, dialectical,
 Aristotelian,
 Pantagruelian,
 Like to chameleon,
 Choppeth and changeth,

Every-where rangeth !
 Who rides like Centaur,
 Preacheth like Mentor,
 Drinks like Lyæus,
 Sings like Tyrtæus,
 Reads like Budæus
 Vaulteth like Tuccaro,
 Painteth like Zucchero,
 Diceth like Spaniard,
 Danceth like galliard,
 Tilts like Orlando,
 Does all man can do !
Qui pupas nobiles
Innumerabiles,
Amat amabiles ;
Atque Reginam
Navarræ divinam !
 Whose rare prosperity,
 Grace and dexterity,
 Courage, temerity,
 Shall, for a verity,
 Puzzle posterity !

“ Ough—ough—” gasped the Jester, “ I
 am fairly out of breath—as old Marot sings
en rimant bien souvent je m’enrime.”

THE FIRST NIGHT.

February 17.

1579.

L'age affoiblit mon discours
Et cette gloire me quitte,
Dont je chantois les Amours
De la Reine Marguerite.

LE PRESIDENT MAYNARD.

Ode à Flotte.

THE FIRST NIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

A MASQUE AT THE LOUVRE :—THE COURT OF HENRI TROIS.

LES peuples pipés de leur mine,
Les voyant ainsi s'enfermer,
Jugeoient qu'ils parloient de s'armer
Pour conquérir la Palestine.
Et toutes fois leur enterprise
Etoit le parfum d'un collet ;
Le point coupé d'une chemise
Et la figure d'un ballet.
De leur mollesse lethargique,
Le discord sortant des enfers,
Des maux que nous avons soufferts
Nous ourdit la toile tragique.

MALHERBE.

THAT night, high festival was held within the Louvre, by its effeminate and voluptuous sovereign, who assembled upon the occasion the whole of his brilliant court, then without

a rival in Europe, either for the number and loveliness of the dames who frequented it, or for the bravery and gallantry of the youthful chivalry, by which it was graced. To Henri III. the lighter amusements of the revel, the ballet, and the masque, were as captivating as the more manly sports of tennis and the chace were to his brother, and predecessor, Charles IX., of execrable memory. His fêtes were sumptuous and frequent—so frequent, indeed, that the chief part of his time was occupied in the arrangement of these magnificent spectacles. The sums lavished upon the marriage-feasts of his favorites, were enormous: the royal coffers were often drained by his inordinate extravagance; and, while the state groaned beneath the weight of the burthens constantly imposed upon it, the unbridled licence that reigned at his orgies, occasioned scandal and discontent throughout the reputable portion of the community, of which his enemies were not slow to take advantage.

Two years before the period of which we treat, Henri gave an entertainment to his brother, the Duc D'Alençon, at which the ladies assisted, ‘ *vestues de verd, en habits d’homme, à moitié nuës, et ayant leurs cheveux épars comme épousées.** The cost of this banquet exceeded a hundred thousand francs! In December, 1576, as we learn from the Journal of his reign, he went *en masque* to the Hôtel de Guise, accompanied by thirty princesses and ladies of his court, richly attired in silks, and silver tissue, braided with pearls and gems of price; and such was the confusion that prevailed, that the more discreet part (*le plus sages Dames et Demoiselles*) were obliged to retire, by reason of the licence of the maskers; for, as it is significantly observed, by Pierre de L’Estoile, the author of the Journal, “ could the walls and tapestry have spoken, they would have, doubtless, found many pleasant particulars to communicate.” Subsequently, in 1583, upon

* Journal de Henri III.—Mai, 1577.

Shrove Tuesday, attended by his favourites, masked like himself, Henri rushed into the streets, where he committed such frantic, and unheard-of follies, and insolences, that he was publicly reprimanded the next day by all the preachers in Paris.

Louise de Lorraine, or de Vaudemont, his queen, a princess of amiable but feeble character, entirely without ambition, (on which account she was selected as a suitable spouse to her son by the crafty Catherine de Medicis ever apprehensive of a rival near the throne), and possessing the negative merit of passive submission, offered no opposition to the wishes of her royal husband, though she took little part in his festivities. Her gentle existence was divided between her oratory, her garden, the establishment of *confréries*, and other religious institutions, and the retirement of a secluded apartment; her daily occupations were embroidery, or the perusal of her book of prayer; her attire was of the simplest material, fashioned chiefly of woollen cloth; and,

though her complexion had become deathly pale, she refused the aid of rouge. Her immediate attendants, and ladies of honour, were recommended to her regard, rather by their piety and decorum of conduct, than for any other more dazzling qualifications. Of this queen, many pleasing traits are narrated—one, in particular, of a reproof conveyed to the flaunting, and over-dressed lady of a president, to whom, in the unpretending garb she had adopted, she was wholly unknown. But taken altogether, her nature was too easy, and acquiescent, and her frame of mind too infirm, to promote in any way the welfare of the kingdom, or, to accomplish the reformation of the monarch to whom she was united. That she found rather sorrow, than happiness in her exalted station, can scarce be doubted; indeed her woes have been thus embalmed in verse, by the Jesuit Le Mcine:—

Son esprit fut gêné dans la couche royale ;
La couronne lui fut une chaîne fatale,
Le Louvre une prison, le trône un echafaut,
Erigé pour montrer son tourment de plus haut.

But, perhaps, the severest of her afflictions consisted in her being denied the blessing of children.

The position which Louise de Vaudemont should have occupied, was assumed by the Queen Mother, who amply supplied whatever might be wanting in her daughter-in-law. In her hands, her sons were mere puppets; they filled thrones, while she wielded their sceptres. Hers was truly, what it has been described, ‘a soul of bronze, or of iron.’ Subtle, secret, Machiavelian—the “Prince” of the plotting Florentine was her constant study—her policy worked in the dark: none could detect her movements till they were disclosed by their results. Inheriting many of the nobler qualities of the Medicis, her hatred was implacable as that of the Borgias; and, like that dread race, her schemes were not suffered to be restrained by any ties of affinity. Rumour attributed to her agency the mysterious removal of her two

elder sons* from the path of the third, who was unquestionably her favorite ; and she was afterwards accused of being accessory to the sudden death of another, the Duc D'Alençon, who perished at Chateau-Thierry, from smelling a bouquet of poisoned flowers.

The court of Catherine de Medicis, in effect that of her son, numbered three hundred of the loveliest and most illustrious damsels of the land, a list of whom will be found in the pages of Brantôme, who falls into raptures in describing the charms of this galaxy of beauties, proclaiming them to be little short of goddesses, and declaring that the palace which they enlightened was *un vray paradis du monde, escole de toute honnesteté et vertu et ornement de la France*. Now, however we may differ from the vivacious Chronicler of the '*Dames Galantes*' in our estimate of the

* See what Thuanus says, upon the *post mortem* examination of Charles IX. lib. lvii.—*ex causâ incognitâ reperti livores*. The death-bed of Charles was, indeed, an awful one ; but its horror would be increased, could we be assured that his excruciating pangs were occasioned by his mother.

‘ *honesteté et vertu*’ of the ladies in question, remembering, as we do, the adventure of the Demoiselle de Limeuil with the Prince de Condé, and the libellous verses which it occasioned, beginning—

*Puella illa nobilis
Quæ erat tam amabilis,
Commisit adulterium
Et nuper fecit filium.*

and which, after alluding to the indignation of the Queen-Mother at the conduct of the frail maid of honour, state, that nothing would satisfy her Majesty short of sending her to a nunnery,—

*Mittens in Monasterium
Quærere refrigerium—*

however, we repeat, we may differ from the Abbé de Brantôme in our notions of their propriety, we are quite satisfied, that his enthusiastic admiration of these dames was fully warranted by their personal attractions. In later times the sparkling court of our own Charles the Second did not boast so much beauty as that of Henri III.

Surrounded by this fair phalanx, Catherine felt herself irresistible. As in the case of the unfortunate Demoiselle de Limeuil, she only punished their indiscretions when concealment was impossible. An accurate judge of human nature, she knew that the most inflexible bosom was no proof against female blandishment, and, armed with this '*petite bande des dames de la cour*,' as they were called, she made use of their agency to counteract the plans of her enemies, and by their unsuspected influence, which extended over all the court, became acquainted with the most guarded secrets of all parties. The profound dissimulation which enveloped her conduct has left the character of Catherine a problem which the historian would in vain attempt to solve; and equally futile would be his endeavours to trace to their hidden sources the springs of all her actions. Blindly superstitious, bigoted, yet sceptical, and, if her enemies are at all to be believed, addicted to the idolatrous worship of false Gods; proud, yet never

guilty of meanness; a fond wife—an Italian woman, yet exhibiting no jealousy of an inconstant husband; a tender mother, yet accused of sacrificing three of her sons to her ambitious views; a rigid observer of etiquette, yet not unfrequently over-looking its neglect; fiery and vindictive, yet never roused to betray her emotions by any gesture of impatience, but veiling her indignation under a mask of calmness, her supposititious character and actions were a perpetual contradiction to each other. The best description of her is perhaps contained in the following satirical epitaph which appeared soon after her demise:—

*La Reine qui cy gît fut un diable et un ange,
Toute pleine de blâme, et pleine de louange,
Elle soutint l'Etat et l'Etat mit à bas,
Elle fit maints accordés, et pas moins de débats,
Elle enfanta trois Rois, et trois guerres civiles,
Fit bâtir des Chateaux, et ruiner des villes;
Fit bien de bonnes loix, et de mauvais edits,
Souhaite-lui, passant, Enfer et Paradis.*

Catherine's, however, was a genius of a high order. No portion of her time was left noc-

cupied. She was a lover of letters and of men of letters—

*Pour ne dégénérer de ses premiers ayeux
Soigneuse a fait chercher les livres les plus vieux
Hebreux, Grecs, et Latins, traduits et à traduire*—*

a cultivator of the arts, and the most perfect horsewoman of her time. To her the ladies are indebted for the introduction of the pommel in the saddle, (female equitation being, up to that period, conducted *à la planchette*,) a mode which, according to Brantôme, she introduced for the better display of her unequalled symmetry of person.

If Catherine was a paradox, not less so was her son, Henri III., whose youth held forth a brilliant promise not destined to be realized in his riper years. The victor of Jarnac and Montcontour—the envy of the warlike youth of his time—the idol of those whose swords had been fleshed in many battles—the chosen monarch of Poland—a well-judging statesman—a fluent and felicitous orator, endowed with

* Ronsard.

courage, natural grace, a fine person, universally accomplished in all the exercises of the tilting-yard, the manège, and the hall-of-arms—this chivalrous and courageous prince as soon as he ascended the throne of France, sank into a voluptuous lethargy, from which, except upon extraordinary occasions, he was never afterwards aroused : his powers of mind—his resolution—his courage, moral and physical, faded beneath the enervating life of sensuality in which he indulged.

Governed by his mother and by his favourites, who were Catherine's chief opponents, and of whose over-weening influence she stood most in fear,—threatened by the Duc de Guise who scarcely deigned to conceal his bold designs upon the Throne—distrusted by the Members of the League, of which he had named himself chief, and who were, for the most part, instruments of the Guise—dreaded by the Huguenots, to whom he had always shown himself a relentless persecutor, and who remembered with horror his cruelties

at the massacre of Saint-Barthélemi, of which dismal tragedy he has avowed himself a principal instrument—opposed by the Pope, and by Philip II. of Spain (his brother-in-law), both of whom were favourable to the claims of Guise—with Henri of Navarre in the field, and his brother the Duc D'Alençon disaffected—fulminated against by the Sorbonne—assailed by one of its doctors, in a pamphlet endeavouring to prove the necessity of his deposition—Henri, with his crown tottering upon his head, still maintained an exterior of the same easy indifference, abandoned none of his pleasures, or his devotions, (for devotion with him took the semblance of amusement—and the oratory and the ball-room were but a step asunder—the mass and the masquerade each the diversion of an hour)—turned a deaf ear to the remonstrances of his counsellors, and could only be awakened, like the Assyrian, from his luxurious trance, when the armed hand was put forth to grasp

his sceptre. Then, indeed, for a brief space he showed himself a king.

It is not, however, with this portion of his reign we have to do, but with that in which this Sybaritic prince was altogether sunk in indolence and dreamy enjoyment.

On the night of which we speak, he had gathered together, within his gorgeous halls, the loveliest and the proudest of his capital. Catherine de Medicis was there with her brilliant bevy of beauties. Marguerite de Valois, the fair Queen of Navarre, then in her seven-and-twentieth summer, and glowing in the noontide warmth of her resplendent charms, was present attended by her train; nor were the gentle Louise de Vaudemont, and her demure and discreet dames of honour absent. All that Henri's court could boast, of grace, wit, youth, beauty, or distinction were assembled. Nothing was wanting to render it in every respect attractive.

Perfumes exhaled from a thousand aromatic lamps, or fragrant exotics filled the

air with sweets ; music, soft and low, breathed from a band of unseen minstrels echoed to the steps of the dancers—lofty plumes waved to the cadences of the melody—small elastic feet twinkled in the varied elastic movements of the figure—now attuned to the rapid whirl of the bransle—now to the graceful and majestic pauses of the Spanish pavanne, or to the grave slow and dignified deportment of the Italian pazzameno.

The fête was a masked one, and all, save the monarch and a few of his privileged followers, wore the vizard. The costumes were endless and diversified, but chosen rather with a view to display the person of the wearer to the best advantage in a guise different from his ordinary one, than with that bizarre taste which characterizes an Italian masquerade or carnival scene. Bright eyes, not less bright than they were seen peeping like stars through the dusky loopholes of the pretty velvet mask called the *touret de nez*, which gave additional piquancy

and effect, where none was needed, to the ruby lips and polished chin of the wearer, rained their influence around. Of all favourers to flirtation, commend us to the mask: beneath its shadow a thousand random darts may be shot that would fall pointless, or never be aimed at, all were it not for this friendly covering. Blessings, therefore, upon him that invented the mask, who has thereby furnished the bashful lover with a remedy for his grievance!

But to return: the splendid company dispersed themselves throughout the long suite of gilded saloons—now listening to the ravishing notes of a concert of harmonious voices—or gathering round the tables where vast sums were lost at trictrac, primero and other forgotten games of hazard—or pausing beneath a scented arcade of flowers—or loitering within the deep embrasure of a tapestried window, or partaking of the sumptuous banquet set forth within the great hall of carousal. The laugh and the jest were loud

and high; the love-speech and its response faint and low.

Amidst the glittering throng might be discerned a group who had laid aside their masks, and who held themselves slightly aloof from the proceedings of the assemblage. More mirth, however, might be observed amongst this party than elsewhere. Their laughter was heard above the conversation; and few were there, whether dames or seigneurs, who passed in review before them, if their gait or features could be detected, but were exposed to a galling fire of raillery and sarcastic remarks.

One amongst their number was treated with marked deference and respect by the others; and it would appear that it was for his amusement that all these witticisms were uttered. as, whenever a successful *hit* was made, he bestowed upon it his applause. He was a man of middle height, slender figure, and had a slight stoop in the shoulders. His countenance was charged with an undefinable

but sinister expression, something between a sneer and a smile. His features were not handsome; the nose being heavy and clubbed, and the lips coarse and thick; but his complexion was remarkable for its delicacy and freshness of tint; neither were his eyes deficient in lustre, though their glances were shifting, suspicious, and equivocal. He wore short moustaches curled upwards from the lips, and a beard *à la royale* tufted his chin. From either ear depended long pearl drops adding to his effeminate appearance, while in lieu of plumes, his black toquet, placed upon the summit of his head, and so adjusted as not to disturb the arrangement of his well-curled hair was adorned with a brilliant aigrette of many-coloured gems. Around his neck he wore a superb necklace of pearls together with a chain of medallions intermingled with ciphers, from which was suspended the lesser order of the Saint-Esprit radiant with diamonds of inestimable value. In fact, the jewels flaming from his belt, the

buckles, and the various fastenings of his magnificent attire were almost beyond computation. On the one hand, this girdle sustained a pouch filled with small silver flacons of perfume, together with a sword with rich hilt and velvet scabbard, and on the other, a chaplet of death's heads, which, ever mindful of a vow to that effect, he constantly carried about his person, and which indicated the strange mixture of religion or hypocrisy, that, together with depravity, went to the composition of the wearer's character. Adorned with the grand order of the Saint-Esprit, and edged with silver lace, his chesnut-coloured velvet mantle, cut in the extremity of the mode, was a full inch shorter than that of his companions. His ruff was of ampler circumference, and enjoyed the happiest and most becoming *don de la rotonde*. Fitting as close to the figure as loops and buttons could make it, his exquisitely worked and slashed pourpoint sat to a miracle, nor less studied was the appointment of the balloon-like hauts

de chausses, swelling over his reins, and which, together with the doublet, were of yellow satin.

Far be it from us to attempt to pourtray the exuberant splendour of his sleeve ; the nice investiture of the graceful limb, with the hose of purple silk, or the sharp point of the satin shoe. No part of his attire was left unstudied, and the *élégant* of the nineteenth century may aspire in vain to emulate the finished decorative taste of the royal exquisite of the sixteenth.

Henri III, for it was the monarch, whom we have endeavoured to describe, conferred as before stated, infinite attention upon the minutiae of the toilet, and carried his consideration of dress somewhat to extremes. Upon the solemnization of his espousals with the Queen Louise, so much time was occupied in the arrangement of himself and his spouse for the ceremonial, that Mass could not be celebrated until five o'clock in the evening ; and the *Te Deum* was in consequence neglected to be sung, an omission which was re-

garded as a most unfortunate augury. Of his personal appearance, moreover, he was excessively vain—and so anxious was he to preserve the delicacy and freshness of his complexion and the smoothness of his skin, that he always wore a mask, and gloves prepared with unguents and softening pastes, during the hours devoted to repose. Few ladies of his court could compete with him in the beauty, and smallness of his hand—a personal grace which he inherited from his mother, and which was enjoyed in common with him by Marguerite de Valois.

Upon the present occasion he had withdrawn one glove, of silk, woven with silver tissue, and pinked with satin, in colours white and incarnadine; and suffered his small and snowy fingers, loaded with sumptuous rings, to stray negligently through the luxuriant ears of a little lap-dog, sustained by the Jester Chicot, who stood at his side. Of dogs Henri was so passionately fond, that he generally drove out with a carriage full of the most beau-

tiful of their species ; and took possession of any others that pleased his fancy in the course of the ride. Of his forcible abduction of their favorites, loud complaints were made by the *réligieuses*, the convents being the best canine store-houses, in the days of this great “ dog-fancier ! ” and frequently resorted to by him for fresh supplies.

Scarcely less splendidly equipped than their sovereign, were the courtiers stationed around him. Upon the right of Henri, who supported himself upon the shoulder of his chief valet, Du Halde, was placed the portly person of the Marquis de Villequier, surnamed “ *le jeune et le gros*,” though now laying little claim to the former epithet, near to whom was his son-in-law, D’O., Superintendant of the Finance, occupied in the childish amusement of the bilboquet, then in vogue with all the courtiers, in consequence of their monarch’s partiality for it. Even the gallant Joyeuse, and the stately D’Épernon disdained not to indulge in this frivolous pastime ; and both of them carried

long silver sarbacanes in their hands, with which, like the modern Italians at a Carnival, they occasionally pelted the maskers with confectionary, and sugar-plumbs—displaying infinite adroitness in their aim.

Engaged in converse with D'Épernon was, François D'Épinay de Saint-Luc, Baron de Crevecœur, another of the favorites of Henri, and equally distinguished with his companions for a courage, which, in its wild and fierce display, amounted almost to ferocity. Saint-Luc was accounted the handsomest man of his time, and universally obtained the epithet of "*le beau*." Many pages and lacqueys, in the sumptuous liveries, and emblazoned array of their lords were in attendance.

"D'Arques," said the King, addressing Joyeuse in a soft and melodius tone, "canst thou inform me whose lovely face lurks beneath yon violet mask (for lovely 'tis, or else the lips and throat belie it)—there, within the train of her majesty, my mother—thou seest whom I mean."

“I do, Sire,” replied Joyeuse; “and I quite concur in your Majesty’s opinion, that the face must be divine, which that envious mask shrouds; the throat is superb, the figure that of a Venus; but as to the angelic owner, though I flatter myself I am sufficiently acquainted with the dames of her Majesty’s suite, to offer a correct conjecture as to nine out of ten, let them be ever so carefully disguised, I own, I am puzzled, by this fair incognita. Her gait is charming. Vive-Dieu! with your Majesty’s permission, I will ascertain the point.”

“Stay,” said the King. “’Tis needless. Saint-Luc, will resolve our doubts at once; ’twas she with whom he danced the Pavane. How name you your fair partner, Baron?”

“I am equally at a loss with yourself, Sire, as to her designation,” replied Saint-Luc, “my efforts were in vain to obtain a glimpse of the features, and with the tones of the voice I was wholly unacquainted.”

“Madame D’Épinay may well be jealous

of her handsome husband," said the King, smiling, (the Baroness, according to the memoirs of the time, was "*bossue, laide et contrefaite et encore pis*," if worse can be well conceived); but if thou, Saint-Luc, hast failed in making an impression upon the fair unknown, which of us shall hope to succeed? It cannot be, though the figure somewhat resembles her's, the Demoiselle de Chastaigneraye, or the fair La Bretesche, Villequier would be able to peer through any disguise she might assume; nor Surgères, Ronsard's divinity, nor Teligni, nor Mirande—Mort-dieu—not one of them is to compare with her; she floats in the dance, as if she moved on air.

"You appear interested, Sire," said Saint-Luc, smiling, to show his superb teeth; "are we to infer that the damsel may plume herself upon a royal conquest?"

"The damsel hath already made another conquest, upon which she has more reason to plume herself," said Chicot.

“ Indeed !” exclaimed Saint-Luc, “ Who may that be ?”

“ Nay, it refers not to thee, beau François,” returned the Jester. “ Thou, like our dear Henriot, art the victim of every passing glance ; and neither of ye are a conquest upon which a maid might especially congratulate herself. Now he whose love she hath won, is one of whose homage a damsel *might* be proud.”

“ Ha !” exclaimed the King, “ thou art in the secret, I perceive. Who is the damsel ? and which of my gentlemen is her admirer !”

“ All appear to be so, Sire,” returned Chicot ; “ but were I to point out the most devoted of her admirers, I should indicate your Majesty’s Jester ; if the most audacious, Saint-Luc—if the most fickle, Joyeuse—if the most grave, D’Épernon—if the most over-weening, D’O—if the most bulky, Villequier—if the most imperious, your Majesty—”

“ And the most successful, thou shouldst add”—interrupted Henri—

“No,” replied Chicot. “In love affairs kings are never successful. They have no *bonnes fortunes*.”

“Wherefore not?” asked Henri, smiling.

“Because their success is due not to themselves, but to their station,” returned the Jester, “and is therefore wholly unworthy of the name. Can it be termed good fortune to obtain that which may not be refused?”

“My ancestor, the great Francis, found it otherwise,” returned the king. “*He* at least was tolerably successful, even in *thy* sense of the word.”

“I doubt it,” replied Chicot. “And so did *my* ancestor Triboulet. Poh! kings are always detected. Did *you* ever find it otherwise, Sire?”

“I shall not make thee my confessor, com-père,” said Henri; “but what wouldst thou say were I to hazard the experiment in the case, of yon fair unknown? What wager wilt thou hold that I do not succeed *en masque*?”

“Never throw away your best card, gossip,”

returned the jester, "that were poor play indeed. "Approach her *en roi*, if you would be assured of triumph. Even *then* I have my doubts. But I will stake my sceptre against yours that in the other case your Majesty is foiled."

"I may put it to the proof anon," replied the King, "I am not wont to be defeated. Meantime I command thee to disclose all thou knowest concerning the damsel in question."

"All I know may be told in a breath, gossip."

"Her name?"

"Esclairmonde."

"A fair beginning. The name likes us well—Esclairmonde de—give me the surname?"

"Le Diable m'emporte! there I am at fault, Sire—she has no surname."

"Sang dieu! be serious, compère."

"By your father, the great Pantagruel—an oath I never ejaculate without due rever-

ence—I swear to you, Sire, I *am* serious. The lovely Esclairmonde hath no patronymic. She hath little occasion to consult the herald for her escutcheon.”

“How, sirrah! and one of the attendants on our mother?”

“Pardon, Sire. You require information—I am literal in my replies. There is a trifling mystery attached to her birth. Esclairmonde is an orphan—a Huguenot.”

“A Huguenot!” exclaimed the King, with an expression of disgust, and hastily crossing himself. “By the holy Eucharist, thou must be in error.”

“The *daughter* of a Huguenot, I should have said,” returned Chicot. “Par la Sainte-Cornesmeuse! no one would look for heretics in the train of her most Catholic Majesty, Catherine de Medicis. They would flee from her as the fiend from holy water. John Calvin hath few disciples within the Louvre.”

“Heaven forbid!” ejaculated the Monarch, fervently grasping his chaplet of mort-heads.

“’Tis strange,” added he, after a moment’s pause, “that I have never before heard of this girl or of her story. Art sure thou art not amusing us with some silly fable?”

“Does Madame Catherine trust you with all her secrets, gossip?” demanded Chicot. “I trow not. But attend to me, and you shall have the story of Esclairmonde, in the true vein of romance.” And assuming a burlesque countenance of mock gravity, the Jester continued. “Immured within her chamber—carefully watched by her Majesty’s attendants—suffered to hold no intercourse with any of the palace—and above all no communion with any suspected of heresy—Esclairmonde until within these few days has led a life of entire seclusion. Whoever her father might be—and that he was of rank, and a veritable Huguenot, cannot methinks be doubted—he perished by the edge of the sword at the day of Saint Barthélemy of blessed memory. While yet a child she was placed within the hands of your royal parent, by whom she hath been reared

in the true Catholic and Apostolic faith, and in the manner I have related."

"Mort-Dieu! the tale is curious," replied the king; "and I now remember somewhat of the details thou hast given, though they had long since escaped my memory. I must see and converse with the fair Esclairmonde. Our mother hath not used us well in neglecting to present the damsel to us."

"Your royal mother hath usually good reason for her actions, Sire, and I will answer for it in the present instance had the best of motives for her apparent neglect."

"Beshrew thy ribald tongue, sirrah," returned Henri laughing; "I have yet, however, another question to put to thee. Have a care that thou answerest it not lightly. Of what particular cavalier hath Esclairmonde made conquest? Of which of these gentlemen? Take no heed of their glances, but reply without fear."

"I should not fear to speak, were it to

any of them that I alluded," replied Chicot ;
" but it was not so. Let these gentlemen
withdraw a few paces, and thou shalt learn
thy rival's name."

At a gesture from the King the courtiers
retired to a little distance.

" 'Tis Crichton," said Chicot.

" Crichton !" echoed the King in surprise—
" the peerless—the Admirable Crichton, as he
hath this day been surnamed—who hath van-
quished our University in close conflict—he
were indeed a rival to be feared. But thou
art wrong in naming him, gossip. Crichton
is ensnared within the toils of our sister of
Navarre, and she is as little likely to brook
inconstancy as any dame within the land.
We are safe, therefore, on that score. Be-
sides, he hath no thought for other beauty.
And, *apropos* of Crichton, it now occurs to me
that I have not seen him to night—will he not
grace our festival? Our sister Marguerite lan-
guishes in his absence like a pining floweret,
nor will she force a smile for Brantôme's

sprightliest sally, or Ronsard's most fanciful rhapsody. What hath become of him?"

"I am wholly ignorant, Sire," replied the Jester. "He started at full speed from the College of Navarre after our affray with those disloyal scholars, *ces bons rustres*, as mine uncle Panurge would call them; several of whom, as I already informed your Majesty, are safely lodged within the Grand-Châtelet awaiting your disposal. But what hath since befallen him I know not, save that he may by accident have thrust his hand into the hornet's nest."

"Thou speakest in riddles, compère," said the King, gravely.

"Here cometh one shall read them for you, Sire," returned Chicot: "One more learned than Œdipus — *Le Rammonneur d'Astrologie*—you will hear all from him."

"Ruggieri!" exclaimed the King. "Is it indeed our Astrologer, or hath some masker assumed his garb?"

"A circumstance not very likely," replied

Chicot, “ unless the wearer has a fancy for being poignarded by *accident*, as will, in all probability, be the case with Ruggieri, provided he escape the stake. But by the awful shade of Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus Paracelsus, I summon within your Majesty’s presence the spirit and substance of, Cosmo Ruggieri, Abbé of Saint-Mahé.”

As Chicot concluded his invocation, the Astrologer advanced towards the King. His countenance was disturbed and anxious.

“ What hath happened, father ? ” asked the Jester, surveying Ruggieri with a malignant grin. “ Are the stars overcast—is the moon eclipsed — or hath a bearded comet risen in the heavens ?—What prodigy hath occurred ? Have thy philters failed—are thine images molten—or hast thou poisoned a friend by mistake ?—Hath thy dwarf eloped with a succuba, or salamander—thy gold turned to withered leaves—thy jewels proved counterfeit —thy drugs lost their virtues ?—By Trimegistus, what hath gone amiss ? ”

“ Can I have an instant’s speech with your Majesty ?” said Ruggieri, with a profound obeisance, and disregarding the taunts of the Jester. “ What I have to say imports you much.”

“ Say on then,” replied the King.

Ruggieri looked at Chicot. Henri waved his hand, and the Jester reluctantly withdrew.

“ I warrant me it is to speak of Crichton and the Gelosa that the accursed old owl hath quitted his roost,” muttered he. “ Would I could catch a syllable of his speech! Methinks I am afflicted with a more than wonted deafness, or the crafty knave hath practised the art of talking in an under-key to some purpose. His Majesty looks wonder-stricken, yet not displeased. He smiles—what pretended secret can the mendacious old mystifier have to make known ?”

Henri, meanwhile, listened with evident surprise to the communication of Ruggieri, but offered no interruption beyond an occasional exclamation of astonishment, accom-

panied by a slight shrug of the shoulders. As the Astrologer concluded, he mused for a moment and then addressed him. "I have observed that mask, Ruggieri," said he smiling, "at the Hôtel de Bourbon, but little thought whose visage it shrouded. Mort-dieu! thou hast let me into a pretty confidence, Abbé.—I have sufficient, methinks, to answer for in my own indiscretions, without making myself responsible for those of others. However, this young galliard shall have my assistance, that is certain. Hath he seen the Duc de Nevers?"

"No, Sire," returned Ruggieri; "and whatever may betide—into whatever perils his youth and hot blood may lead him, I implore your Majesty to maintain his secret, and to afford him your protection."

"Fear not. You have our royal word. Corbieu! I delight in mysteries and intrigue of all kinds, and will lend him a helping hand with pleasure. He is a youth after my own heart, to engage in such a madcap frolic.—I

am charmed with his story, yet I own I can scarce comprehend how a player-girl like this can occasion him so much trouble. Our actresses are not wont to be so hard-hearted, —ha—ha—especially to one of our masker's consequence—eh, Abbé ?—this is new, methinks.”

“ There is magic in the case, Sire,” replied Ruggieri, mysteriously ; “ he is spell-bound.”

“ Ave Maria!” said the King, crossing himself devoutly—“ Shield us, holy Mother, from the devices of the evil one ! And yet, Ruggieri, I must own I am somewhat sceptical as to these imaginary temptations. More witchcraft resides in the dark eyes of that Gelosa, than in thy subtlest compounds. But from whatever source her attraction originates, it is clear that the charm is sufficiently potent to drive our Mask to his wits' ends, or he had never committed such extravagancies in her pursuit.”

“ Sire, I have now fulfilled my mission,” returned Ruggieri. “ I have put your Majesty

upon your guard against what may be urged by Crichton. Have I your permission to depart?"

"Stay!" said the King, "a thought strikes me. Du Halde," exclaimed he, motioning to the chief valet "say to the Queen, our mother, that we would confer an instant with her; and add our request that her Majesty will, at the same time, take an opportunity of presenting the Demoiselle Esclairmonde."

Du Halde bowed and departed.

"I have *my* mystery, likewise, Ruggieri; and, singularly enough, this Crichton is in some way mixed up with it. For the first time this evening, I discover that a beauty of the first order has been nurtured within the Louvre, whom no one knows, but with whom I find Crichton is in love. Scarcely have I recovered from the surprise into which I was thrown by this incident, when thou comest to tell me that the pretty Geloso, with whose canzonettas and romances I have been so much delighted, and who has been the life and

soul of our comedies, turns out to be a girl in masquerade who, pursued by an ardent Italian, flings herself into Crichton's arms. What am I to think of all this, knowing, as I do, that this very Crichton is the favoured lover of our sister Marguerite, who for him has abjured all her old amourettes, and who watches over him with a jealous frenzy like that of a first passion? What am I to think of it, I say?"

"That Venus smiled upon his nativity, Sire," replied Ruggieri, with a profound inclination of his head.—"Little is due to himself—much to the celestial influences.—He is predestined to success. By Nostradamus! 'tis fortunate for your Majesty that you are not placed in a similar predicament with our Mask. Had your affections been fixed upon the same damsel with Crichton, I fear even *your* chance, Sire, would have been a slight one.

"Sang-Dieu!" exclaimed Henri, "they are all of one opinion. These are Chicot's sentiments exactly. Mark me, Ruggieri. As

concerns Esclairmonde, I have my own designs. In this matter of the Gelosa, thou and thy Mask may calculate upon my countenance: in return I shall require thy assistance should any unforeseen obstacles present themselves. As to Crichton, we will leave him to the vigilance of our sister Marguerite. A hint will suffice with her. She will save us a world of trouble. In affairs of gallantry, we shall see whether even the Admirable Crichton can cope with Henri de Valois."

Ruggieri shrugged his shoulders.

" 'Tis vain to struggle with the stars, Sire. Che sara, sara."

" But the stars say not that Esclairmonde shall be his—eh, Abbé?"

" His destiny is a proud one," replied Ruggieri; " that at least they have foretold."

At this moment Du Halde approached, announcing " Her Majesty, Catherine de Medicis and the Demoiselle Esclairmonde."

Both were unmasked.

CHAPTER II.

ESCLAIRMONDE.

La Reyne-Mère avoit ordinairement de fort belles et honorables filles, avec lesquelles tous les jours en son antichambre on conversoit, on discouroit, on devoit, tant sagement et tant modestement que l'en n'eust osé faire autrement.

BRANTÔME—*Dames Illustres. Discours II.*

Un roi qui s'amuse est un roi dangereux.—VICTOR HUGO.

HENRI III., though perfectly heartless, was the politest monarch in the world. With all the refined courtesy of manner, therefore, for which he was so eminently distinguished, he gracefully advanced towards Esclairmonde, and, as she tendered to him her homage, he gallantly raised her hand to his lips, and, with his most captivating smile, proceeded to eulogize her beauty in those soft periods of adulation which kings know so well how to turn, and no king better than Henri,—

exerting himself so well to relieve her embarrassment that his efforts were not long unsuccessful. To a monarch's attention, indeed, few female hearts are insensible.

Startled at the sight of the Astrologer, for whose unbidden appearance at the fête she felt unable to account, and who in vain, by sundry significant gestures sought to convey to her some notion of his errand to the Louvre, Catherine de Medicis, ever suspicious of her confidants, could not—or would not—be made to comprehend his hints; but, regarding him with a look of displeasure during the brief ceremonial of presentation, she motioned him aside, so soon as etiquette permitted her, and proceeded to question him as to the cause of his presence. Seeing his lynx-eyed mother thus occupied, Henri, not slow to profit by the opportunity which her present distraction afforded him, of assailing the heart of her lovely maid-of-honour,—preferred Esclairmonde his hand, and gently drew her towards the deep embrasure of one

of the magnificent windows, where they might converse unobserved.

Though not habitually sincere in his expressions of admiration, we must, upon this occasion, acquit Henri of any attempt to dissemble. He was greatly struck—as, indeed, he could not fail to be—with the surpassing loveliness of Esclairmonde. Accustomed to the blaze of beauty by which his court was encircled—with a heart little susceptible of any new emotion, and with a disposition to judge somewhat too nicely each attribute of female perfection—he could not help admitting, that not only were the charms of Esclairmonde without parallel, but that there was no point either of her countenance or person, or, what was of equal importance in his eyes, of her *attire*, which his critical eye did not pronounce to be faultless.

Alas! how inadequate are mere *words* to convey a notion of the beauty we would wish to portray. The creation of the poet's fancy fades in the evanescent colouring he is com-

pelled to employ. The pen cannot trace what the pencil is enabled so vividly to depict: it cannot accurately define the exquisite contour of the face, neither can it supply the breathing hues of the cheek—the kindling lustre of the eye—the dewy gloss of the lip—or the sheen of the hair—be it black as the raven's wing, or glowing as a sunbeam, or fleecy as a summer cloud. The imagination alone can furnish these details; and to the reader's imagination we would gladly intrust the portraiture of Esclairmonde, venturing, however, to offer a few further hints for his guidance.

Imagine, then, features moulded in the most harmonious form of beauty, and chiselled with a taste, at once softened and severe. The eyes are of a dark, deep blue, swimming with a chastened tenderness. An inexpressible charm reigns about the lips; and a slight dimple, in which a thousand Cupids might bask, softly indents the smooth and rounded chin. Raised from the brow so as completely

to display its snowy expanse, the rich auburn hair is gathered in plaits at the top of the head—crisped with light curls at the sides—ornamented with a string of pearls, and secured at the back with a knot of ribbands; a style of head-dress introduced by the unfortunate Mary Stuart, from whom it derived its name, and then universally adopted in the French court. The swan-like throat is encircled by a flat collar of starched muslin, edged with pointed lace. Rich purple velvet of Florence constitutes the material of the dress—the long and sharp bodice of which attracted Henri's attention to the slender shape and distinctly-defined bosom of the lovely Demoiselle.

In passing, we may remark, that the rage for the excessively attenuated waist was then at its highest. Our tight-laced grandmothers were nothing to the wasp-shaped dames of the Court of Catharine de Medicis. Fitting like a cuirass, the corset was tightened around the shape till its fair wearer, if her

figure happened to exceed the supposed limits of gracefulness, could scarcely gasp beneath the parasite folds—while the same preposterous sleeve which characterized the cavaliers of the period, likewise distinguished the dames. Nor had Esclairmonde neglected due observance of this beauty-outraging mode, or, despite her personal attractions, she had hardly found favour in her Sovereign's eyes. These prodigious coverings of the arms, we are informed, were stuffed out and sustained by a huge pile of wool, and were of such amplitude and width that they would easily have contained three or four of our modern, and, by comparison, moderately-sized, sleeves. Edged with pointed lace, starched like that of the collar, a ruff of muslin completed the gear of the arm. Around her neck was hung a chain of bronze medallions, and a single pear-shaped pearl descended from the acute extremity of her stomacher.

Tall and majestic in figure, the carriage of Esclairmonde was graceful and dignified ;

and, as he contemplated her soft and sunny countenance, Henri thought that, with one solitary exception, he had never beheld an approach to its beauty. That exception was Mary of Scotland, whose charms, at the period when she was united to his elder brother, Francis the Second, had made a lively impression on his youthful heart, some sense of which he still retained, and whose exquisite lineaments those of Esclairmonde so much resembled, as forcibly to recal their remembrance to his mind. There was the same sleepy langour of the dark, blue eye—the same ineffable sweetness of smile—the same pearly teeth displayed by that smile—the same *petit nez retroussé* (that prettiest of all feminine features and well meriting La Fontaine's admiration—

*Nez troussé, c'est une charme encore selon mon sens,
C'en est même un des plus puissans—*

though perhaps it may evidence a slight tendency to coquetry on the part of the

owner)—the same arched and even brow—in short, there were a hundred traits of resemblance which Henri was not slow to discover. In a few minutes he became desperately in love; that is, as much in love as a King could be under the circumstances, and moreover such a *blasé* King as Henri.

“By Cupidon! belle Esclairmonde,” said he, still retaining possession of her hand, “we are half disposed to charge our Mother with leze-majesté in having so long denied us the gratification we now experience in welcoming to our mask the loveliest of our guests. Mort-Dieu! ardent admirer as she knows we are of beauty, her Majesty’s omission savours of positive cruelty; nor should we so readily have overlooked the fault, did not our present satisfaction in some degree reconcile us to our previous disappointment.”

“Your Majesty attaches more importance to the circumstance than it merits,” returned Esclairmonde, gently endeavouring to disengage her hand. “Flattered as I am by your

notice, it is an honour to which I had no pretension to aspire."

"In faith, not so, fair Demoiselle," replied the King. "Beauty has a claim upon our attention to which all other recommendations are secondary. We were no true Valois were it otherwise. You will not refuse me your hand at the banquet," added he in a lower tone, and with an *empressement* of manner which could not be mistaken. The colour mounted to Esclairmonde's cheeks.

"Sire!" returned she, with a thrill of apprehension, "my hand is at your disposal."

"But not your heart?" asked the King in an impassioned whisper.

Esclairmonde trembled. She saw at once the danger of her position, and she summoned all her firmness to her assistance.

"Sire!" replied she, with her eyes fixed upon the ground, and in a tone which struggled to be firm, "my heart is not my own. It is devoted to another."

"Mort-Dieu!" exclaimed the King, unable

to control his displeasure. "You avow it—you love ——."

"I said not so, Sire."

"How!—and devoted to another?"

"I am betrothed to heaven; my destiny is the cloister."

"Is that all?" said Henri, recovering his composure. "I half suspected there were other ties that bound you to earth. But a cloister—no, no—this must never be, *mignonne*."

"Your Majesty will not oppose heaven's inclinations," replied Esclairmonde.

"I will not oppose my own," rejoined Henri, gaily; "the sacrifice were too great. No monastery shall entomb so fair a saint as thou, while I can hinder it. Heaven, I am assured, has no inclination to rob us of the treasures it has blessed us withal. Such gifts are not lightly bestowed, nor should they be heedlessly thrown away; and I shall fulfil a duty devolved upon me, in preventing such an immolation at the shrine of mistaken zeal,

as would be *your* imprisonment in a cloister. If the resolution proceed from the Queen our mother, our authority shall be interposed to restrain her intentions, for, by our Lady! I cannot believe that you, child, have any such dissatisfaction with the world as to wish to withdraw yourself from it, when its gayest prospects are opening before your view; when your path is strewn with flowers; and when all the chivalry of France, with their monarch at their head, are eager to contend for your smiles."

"It is your royal mother's will that I accept it," replied Esclairmonde, timidly glancing at Catherine de Medicis, who, still engaged in deep conference with the Astrologer, was too much absorbed to observe her look. "From her Majesty's resolves there is no alternative. I am her dependant; she will dispose of me as she may see fitting."

"But not without our concurrence," returned the King; "the which we shall be slow to grant. Mort-Dieu!—her Majesty trifles

with our sceptre till she fancies that it is her own hand that sways it. We must convince her to the contrary. How she can have entertained a notion so absurd as to think of burying one of the loveliest of her attendants within the gloom of a convent, passes our comprehension. Had it been our Queen Madame Louise de Vaudemont, who ever carries a missal within her gibecière, we could have understood it; but that our mother, who, though zealous as ourselves at her vespers and masses, has no particular fanaticism, should contemplate an act so preposterous, seems unaccountable. *Morbleu!* she must have some motive."

"Her Majesty has no motive of which I am aware, save zeal in the cause of her religion."

"So it may appear to you, *mignonne*; but our mother's reasons lie not on the surface. Be they what they may, you need no longer apprehend her interference. Unless prompted by your own inclinations, you

will never utter the vows which will bind you wholly to heaven to the neglect of all on earth."

"My lips shall never utter them," said Esclairmonde, with earnestness; "but I cannot—dare not accept this boon from you, Sire."

"And why not, ma mie?"

"Monarchs bestow not favours without anticipation of requital—I can make no requital."

"You can, at least, requite me with a smile," said Henri, tenderly.

"Upon my knees, Sire," replied Esclairmonde, "would I thank you for the precious boon you promise me, would *thanks* suffice; but I feel they would not. I cannot misunderstand your looks. Gratitude, devotion, loyal affection towards your Majesty will ever influence my bosom; but not *love*, except such as a subject should feel towards her sovereign. My life—my destiny is at your disposal; but seek not my heart, Sire, which

is neither mine to bestow, nor yours to solicit.”

“ If not your own,” said Henri, somewhat maliciously, “ to whose keeping have you intrusted it?”

“ The question is ungenerous—unworthy of your Majesty.”

“ You need not answer it then,” returned the King: “ the rather,” added he, with a meaning smile, “ that the secret is ours already. Few whispers breathed within these walls fail to reach our ears; nor were those of the Admirable Crichton so low ‘as to escape our attention. Ha—Demoiselle, are we wrong?”

“ Sire!”

“ Nay, tremble not, child; I betray no confidences. There is one person, however, against whom I must put you upon your guard. You know her not as well as I do— Fate grant you never may.”

“ To whom does your Majesty allude?” asked Esclairmonde, with an expression of uneasiness.

“ Can you not guess?”

“ Nay, Sire.”

“ Have you no suspicion? Does not your heart prompt you?—I’ faith you are not so much taken with this Crichton as I imagined, or else, which I can scarce believe, you have little jealousy in your composition.”

“ Of whom would your Majesty have me entertain a feeling of jealousy? Against whom would you put me on my guard?”

“ Whom see you yonder—the star queen of the revel, round whom all the lesser orbs revolve,—who attracts all within her sphere, and who sheds, as such stars generally do, her rays on all alike?”

“ Your Majesty’s sister, Madame Marguerite de Valois?”

“ Precisely; and it is of *her* we counsel you to beware.”

“ I do not understand you.”

“ Mort-Dieu! that is strange. We are sufficiently explicit. You don’t mean to say, that in alluding to Crichton’s amourette with our sister Marguerite we tell you anything

new. Why, the whole court rings, or did ring, with it; for, in fact, the scandal is somewhat stale, and no one now concerns himself about it. Our sister changes her gallants so often that her constancy is the only thing which excites a moment's marvel. A short while ago it was Martigues—then La Mole—(per Hyacinthus)—then le beau Saint-Luc—then Monsieur de Mayenne, “*bon compagnon, gros et gras*,” as our brother Henri of Navarre calls him—then Turenne, a caprice—then Bussy D’Amboise, a real passion. After Bussy, appeared Crichton, who, having disarmed D’Amboise, till that time deemed invincible in the duel, became the reigning favourite—making the grand corollary to these pleasant premises. So the affair stands at present. How long it is likely to continue, rests with you to determine. Marguerite will never brook a rival; and can you suffer him you love to be the slave—the minion of another?”

“ I knew it not. And does he— does the

Seigneur Crichton—aspire to *her* affections?”

Henri smiled.

“ He has deceived you,” said he, after an instant’s pause, during which time he intently watched the workings of her countenance.

“ He has, indeed,” replied she, with a look of anguish.

“ Forget him.”

“ I will try to do so.”

“ Nay more,—revenge is in your power. His perfidy demands it. The game is in your hands—Play off a *King* against his *Queen*.”

“ Never.”

“ The cloister, then, awaits you.”

“ I will die rather.”

“ How?”

“ I will never accept the veil.”

“ What is this? You have no scruples of conscience. Pshaw! the adopted of Catherine de Medicis a heretic—it cannot be.”

“ It is enough that I am prepared to die.”

“ You still cling to life, Demoiselle—to hope—to love.”

“ I cling to heaven, Sire,—in God alone is my support.”

“ Then why decline the veil ?”

Esclairmonde replied not.

“ Ha ! this hesitation. My suspicions I fear were not unfounded. You are not led away by the damnable doctrines of those arch-impostors, Luther, Zuinglius and Calvin ? You are not the dupe of their miserable heresies ? You have not compromised your salvation. Demoiselle ?”

“ I would rather hope I have secured it, Sire,” replied Esclairmonde, meekly.

“ Speak !” exclaimed Henri, after a muttered Ave.—“ Say it is *not* so.”

“ It *is* so,” replied Esclairmonde, firmly.

“ What ! you avow yourself ——.”

“ I am a Protestant.”

“ Damnation !” ejaculated Henri, recoiling, telling his beads, and sprinkling himself with perfume from one of the flacons at his

girdle—"A Protestant, Mort-Dieu!—I shall expire—a heretic in our presence!—it is an affront to our understanding,—and the girl is so pretty, too—Diable! *Indulgentiam absolutionem et remissionem peccatorum tribue, Domine!*" continued he, devoutly crossing himself—"I am stricken with horror—pah! *Ab omni phantasiâ et nequitia vel versutiâ diabolicæ fraudis libera me, Domine!*" And he recited another paternoster, performing a fresh aspersion, after which he added with more composure:—"Luckily no one has overheard us. It is not too late to recant your errors. Recal those silly words, and I will endeavour to forget them."

"Sire," replied Esclairmonde, calmly, "I cannot recal what I have asserted. I am of the faith of which I have already avowed myself a member. I reject all other creeds save that which I *believe* to be the truth. In that I will live—in that, if need be, die."

"Your words may prove prophetic, De-

moiselle," returned Henri with a sneer. "Are you aware of the peril in which this mad avowal of your opinions might place you?"

"I am prepared to meet the doom, which in the same cause, made martyrs of my father and all my family."

"Tush!—your heretics are ever stubborn. This accounts for your non-compliance with my wishes. However," muttered he, "I shall not give up the point thus readily, nor for a scruple or so in point of conscience, baulk my inclinations. Besides, I remember I have an indulgence from his holiness, Gregory XIII., providing for such a contingency as the present. Let me see, it runs thus: for an affair with a Huguenot, twelve additional masses per week, to be continued for three weeks; item—a rich coffer for the Sacristy of the Innocents; item—a hundred rose-nobles for the Ursulines, and a like sum for the Hieronimites; item—a procession with the Flagellants; and then I have the condonation of his Holiness. The penance is light enough,

and were it more severe, I would willingly incur it. 'Tis strange—a Huguenot perdue in the Louvre—this must be enquired into. Our mother must be in the secret. Her mystery—her caution—proclaim her acquaintance with the fact. We will enquire into it at our leisure, as well as investigate all particulars of this girl's story. A Huguenot! Mort-dieu! From whom," added he, addressing Esclairmonde, "did you derive these abominable doctrines, Demoiselle?"

"Your Majesty will excuse my answering that question."

"As you please, mignonne. This is neither the time nor the place to enforce a reply. Your story and your conduct alike perplex me,—no matter, time will unravel the affair. Now mark me, Demoiselle. As yet I have approached you as a humble suitor, desirous in that capacity to win your regard. I now resume the king, and remind you, that you are my subject, that your life—your liberty—your person—are at my dis-

posal ; nor shall I forget the interests of your soul, in which good office I may call in the assistance of some of my most zealous ecclesiastics. If my measures appear harsh, you must thank your own perversity. My wish is to be lenient. Obedience is all I require. Till midnight, therefore, I give you to reflect. On the one hand you will weigh my favour—my protection—my love, for I still love you ; on the other, Crichton's infidelity—a cloister,—perchance a darker doom. Make your own election. After the banquet I shall expect your answer."

" My answer will still be the same," returned Esclairmonde.

At this moment, a loud clapping of hands was heard at the further end of the hall, and the music replied to the acclamations in loud and joyous strains. To Esclairmonde the notes sounded wild and dissonant, and the laughing buzz of gaiety pealed like the din of some infernal concourse. The glittering saloon and its gay and ever-changing throng

of masks and revellers vanished from her sight, and before her, like a ghastly vision, rose the cowed inquisitors, the stern and threatening judges, the white-robed sisterhood, in whose presence she seemed to stand with hair unbound—her veil thrown across her eyes. She shrank as for protection, and recovered her senses only to encounter the leering and libertine gaze of Henri.

Again the music sounded joyously, and the torches of the bransle being lighted, the giddy dancers passed them in a whirl of flame.

Behold the brand of beauty tost!
 See how the motion does dilate the flame!
 Delighted Love his spoils does boast,
 And triumph—in this game.

WALLER.

“Ma foi, we lose time here,” said the king. “Not a word, Demoiselle—as you value your life or his, of our converse, to Crichton—should he still, as is not unlikely, make his appearance at our revel.—Resume your mask and maintain your composure. Soh, ’tis well.”

Though scarcely able to command herself, Esclairmonde, in compliance with the King's request, placed her violet-coloured mask upon her face, and yielded, not without a shudder, her hand.

As they issued from the recess in which their conversation had taken place, the Jester Chicot advanced towards the monarch.

“What wouldst thou, gossip?” said Henri.
“Thy sapient countenance is charged with more than its usual meaning.”

“A proof I am neither in love nor drunk, compère,” replied Chicot; “as in either case our family resemblance becomes the stronger, your majesty being always either the one or the other, and not unfrequently both. The superabundance of my meaning, therefore, you will lay to the charge of my sobriety and discretion.”

“What may this flourish portend?”

“What the crier proclaims in the market place—news, gossip—news.”

“Good or bad?”

“ Bad to you—good to your partner.”

“ How so?”

“ Because what you both expected has come to pass: she will be gratified—your highness dissatisfied.”

“ Ah—bah!—this jesting is ill timed.”

“ Then it is in keeping with your Majesty’s love-making.”

“ Be silent, sirrah, or say what brings thee hither!”

“ What shall be done to the man whom the King delighteth to honour?”

“ And who is the man, gossip?”

“ He who threatens, more than Henri of Lorraine, or Henri of Navarre, or Philip of Spain, or, despite the Salic law, your royal mother to depose you, Sire—see how your loyal subjects quit your side. If your Majesty decline the office, permit the Demoiselle Esclairmonde to offer him welcome.”

“ Ha! I begin to comprehend thee. Is it he our University hath nicknamed the Admirable Crichton whom thou wouldst announce.”

“ I took the precaution to warn your Majesty of his advent, as I would apprise a friend of a jealous husband’s return.”

“Crichton !” exclaimed Esclairmonde, roused from her stupor by the mention of her lover’s name—“ he here ! May I crave your permission to rejoin her Majesty ?”

“ By no means, mignonne,” replied Henri, coldly. “ We would not deprive you of the pleasure of witnessing our interview with this phœnix of schoolmen. You will, therefore, remain near us—and neglect not,” added he, in a tone only calculated for Esclairmonde’s hearing, “ the caution we have given you. You shall have proof enough of his inconstancy anon. Messigneurs —” added he aloud, addressing the Lords in attendance—“ approach. The victor of the University is at hand. It is not often that it falls to a King’s lot to number a scholar amongst his courtiers. You may remember, Messigneurs, in our last tourney, and at the after combat of the wild beasts, we foretold

Crichton's distinction. He *has* distinguished himself, but in a way we least expected. We promised him a boon—to-night we will redeem our royal pledge. Joyeuse, bid her Majesty of Navarre attend upon us. To her, no doubt, our welcome will possess peculiar interest. Madame, our mother, if your conference be ended with Ruggieri, your presence will lend additional grace to our reception. Be seated, we pray you. We would welcome the Admirable Crichton as a King should welcome him."

Seating himself upon a richly-ornamented fauteuil, brought by his attendants, Henri was instantly encompassed by his courtiers, who formed a brilliant semicircle around him.

Catherine de Medicis, whose conference with the Astrologer had been long since ended, remarked Henri's attention to Esclairmonde with some dissatisfaction. Accustomed, however, rather to encourage her son's wayward inclinations than to check them (and therein lay the secret of her rule), she allowed no expression of displeasure to escape her, but

took her seat majestically by his side. Behind Catherine, crouched Ruggieri, uneasily shuffling to and fro with the glare and the shifting movement of a caged hyæna.

Nearer to the King, and clinging to his throne for support, was placed Esclairmonde, now almost in a state of distraction.

Chicot familiarly reclined himself at his Sovereign's feet, with his marotte in hand, and Henri's long-eared, large-eyed, favourite on his knee, its pensile tresses sweeping the floor. Poor Chatelar! As the gentle animal submitted to his caress, Henri thought for an instant of her from whom he had received him as a sister's remembrance—he thought of Mary of Scotland—of her captivity—of her charms,—and of Esclairmonde's strange resemblance to her—and this brought back the whole tide of passion.

“Singular — most singular,” mused he. “Would she had been a Jewess or a Pagan! There might then have been some hope of her —but a Huguenot—ouf!”

CHAPTER III.

HENRI III.

Don Carlos—A genoux, duc ! recois ce collier—sois fidèle !—

Par saint Etienne, duc, je te fais chevalier.—

VICTOR HUGO. *Hernani. Acte IV., Scene VI.*

CRICHTON'S arrival at the revel had created a sensation throughout the room. His brilliant achievements at the University, which coupled with his gallant and chivalrous and anything but scholastic character, excited universal astonishment, formed the chief topic of conversation, and every body expressed his surprise as to the time when he acquired that wondrous store of erudition which had confounded all the wisdom, and perplexed the subtlest dialecticians of the land. That he had it by intuition was the prevailing opinion.

How else could he have attained such boundless information? He was seen at the chace, the hall of arms, the carousal, the fête of yesterday; at all and each of which places it was observed that he entered with more zest into the spirit of the scene, and pursued the "passing Cynthia of the minute" with more complete abandonment than any one who had been present with him. In short, he had been every where, but where he might be supposed to be, alone and in his study. He had been the life of every thing—dashing at all, and succeeding in all; rejecting nothing in the whole round of pleasurable amusement—now swayed by the smile of beauty—now attracted by the beck of the gamester, whose dice seemed obedient to his will, with such skill did he handle the box—now pledging toast for toast with the votary of Bacchus, whose glowing cups seemed to have for him no inebriation. He had been all this and more; and yet this reckless, heedless voluptuary, who pursued enjoyment with an intensity of

zeal unknown even to her most ardent followers, had excelled the learned and laborious denizens of wisdom's chosen retreat.

All this was incomprehensible. There was only one way of solving the riddle, and to that the superstition of the age disposed almost every one to attach credence. A mind so over informed—a person so richly gifted—could only have become so by knowledge wrested from unearthly powers. He must be the German Doctor Faust endowed with perpetual youth, or the fantastical physician Hieronymus Cardan revisiting earth for a new term; or Paracelsus, or, perchance, the great magician Cornelius Agrippa himself, as his black dog answered exactly to Paul Jovius's description of the huge necromantic poodle which accompanied that dread sorcerer, and which had not been heard of since it plunged headlong into the Soane.

This conclusion was somewhat negatived by Crichton's notorious and undeniable religious observances; but it at least served to invest his

character with mystery, and consequently with fresh interest. Every body likes the marvellous; and in the sixteenth century people raved about it. Politics and religion, which were then (even more than in these days) so intimately mixed up together that the consideration of the one necessarily involved that of the other, were left undiscussed by the statesmen who were occupied in canvassing the character of Crichton. If a cavalier adverted to a duel, it was one in which Crichton had figured either as principal or second. If a gallant commenced a flirtation, he found his inamorata's mind occupied with the prevailing idea. Nothing was talked of, or regarded but what had some reference, direct or indirect, to Crichton.

As he delayed his appearance, every one became feverish with impatience. Nothing went on as it ought to do—never had ball at the Louvre been known to be so dull. Even the flirtations wanted spirit—“He is shockingly late,” said one. “I begin to be

apprehensive he will not come at all," said another. "Don't think of such a thing," said a third. "Take my word for it, he will be here anon," rejoined a fourth speaker, the Abbé de Brantôme; "your meteors always rise late." And so it proved. Just as Crichton was given up, he arrived.

All was animation in an instant. The report flew along the saloon on wings, swifter than those of scandal. "He is arrived," was echoed from mouth to mouth. The songsters were deserted, though the band was Catherine's choicest Italian company—the ballet was abandoned, though it had only just commenced—though the *danseuses* were the most graceful imaginable, and *à moitié nues*—a great recommendation in those days as in our own—the *bransle-de-flambeau* was neglected, though the perfumed torches had reached the point when their blaze makes one giddy whirl of many-coloured flame—the stately pavanne broke into a quick movement—the grave pazzameno lost all bounds—the commotion

became general—the infection irresistible. Eyes, brighter than the jewels of their wearers, rained their influence upon Crichton as he passed, and odorous bouquets fell at his feet as if they had dropped like manna from the skies. Human nature could not resist homage so flattering, and Crichton appeared for an instant almost overpowered by it.

The same richness of taste which characterized Crichton's costume of the morning, distinguished his evening attire. He wore no mask—nor, what was then generally adopted, a toque or cap with a panache of gay coloured feathers—neither had he assumed any garb of character or fancy. His dress was a rich suit of white satin slashed with azure, the just-au-corps and chausses of which fitted without a crease to the modelled limbs. Having divested himself moreover of his Spanish cloak and plumed cap in the hall of entrance, nothing interfered with the exact display of his symmetrical person; and as, with a step elastic and buoyant as that of the winged

Mercurius, yet withal majestic, with figure well-poised, he passed through the crowded groups, he appeared like one of those shapes of superhuman grace and beauty which have started almost into existence from the spirit-breathing pencil of Retsch.

Not a trace of the fatigue which might be supposed to be incident to his prolonged intellectual conflict and exertions, was discernible in his proud, steadfast features. High emotions were stamped upon his lofty brow—but his countenance was radiant—and a smile sat upon his lip. With a chivalrous and courteous grace, he returned the manifold congratulations and compliments that were showered upon him, neither appearing to avoid nor yet to court attention, but essaying as speedily as he might, to pass on in the direction of the King, who, as the reader is aware, was seated at the upper end of the grand saloon. While he thus threaded his course, new exclamations of admiration resounded on all hands, and, as the spectators

followed his god-like figure, fresh in its youthfulness and apparently inexhaustible vigour, many reflections were made, as to whether mere *humanity* could ever be so perfect.

Presently Du Halde made his appearance; and, sensible that all eyes were upon him, that mirror of courtliness and etiquette performed his task to admiration. The announcement was quite a scene in its way.

Upon Henri's intimation being made known, a new impetus was given to the assemblage. In vain the almost bewildered Du Halde raised high his fleur-de-lis-covered rod of office. In vain he shrugged his shoulders, and made the most pathetic remonstrances, and to remonstrances added entreaties, and to entreaties, threats. The tide would not be repressed; but, like that of the scholars of the morning, pressed forward quite resolved, it would seem, to be present at Crichton's audience with the King. Deference, however, for their Sovereign's presence withheld them, as they came

within a few paces of his Majesty, from advancing further. The royal guard of halberdiers, pages and lacqueys, placed themselves in front, and thus was instantly formed a dense phalanx of cavaliers and dames of every age and rank—including the magnates of the hierarchy and the state, in the proudest attire of their orders, or in mask or domino, or other quaintly-devised array.

The clamour subsided, as, preceded and announced by Du Halde, Crichton presented himself to the King and made a graceful and profound obeisance. The music also ceased, there being no longer any reason for its continuance. The distant minstrel strained his neck to gaze at what was going forward in the royal circle, and the attendant at the refreshment table took the opportunity of pledging his companions in a brimmer of Cyprus.

Meanwhile the royal group had been increased by the arrival of the lovely Marguerite de Valois, and her scarcely less lovely maids

of honour, La Torigni, Françoise de Montmorenci, surnamed la Belle, La Fosseuse, and La Rebours; the two latter of whom have been immortalised by Sterne, in his luculent chapter on “Whiskers;” and who, subsequently to our narrative, contributed to the list of beauties to whom the Grand Alcandre (Henri IV.) accorded his favours.

The Queen Louise, with her discreet dames, had just withdrawn, it having been whispered to her Majesty that her august spouse had betrayed symptoms of a new passion.

Henri III. was wholly unprepared for, and not altogether pleased by the rapturous demonstrations of his court's admiration of Crichton; but he was too much of an adept in simulation, too deeply versed in his mother's Machiavelian principles, to suffer any indication of displeasure to escape him. On the contrary, he received the laurel'd scholar with his blandest and most deceptive smile, graciously extending him his hand and, apparently not content with this mark

of his friendship, instantly after raised him from his kneeling posture, and, opening his arms, cordially embraced him.

An irrepressible murmur of applause following this act of gracious condescension shewed that Henri had not miscalculated its effect upon the enthusiastic minds of the spectators. In fact, despite his malevolence, he could not be entirely insensible to the influence of the scene; and, in common with all present, felt and recognized the majesty and might of mind, and its wondrous combination in the present case with personal advantages, sufficient in themselves to rivet the attention of all beholders. He knew that he was in the presence of one of the master spirits of the age; and for an instant, forgetting Esclairmonde, half persuaded himself he was in reality the gracious monarch his courtiers conceived him to be.

There was one, however, who viewed his conduct in a different light: but she was mute.

“Vive le Roi!—Vive notre bon Henriot!”

cried Chicot, who had withdrawn himself on Crichton's approach, addressing the Vicomte de Joyeuse, who stood near him, "The grande Rue Saint-Jacques appears to be the high-road to his Majesty's favour. Henceforth we shall all become scholars, and I may exchange my fool's bauble for a folio, my cockscomb for the *cappa rotunda*, and my surcoat for the prescribed *tabaldi seu houssiæ longæ* of the college of Navarre. How say you? It is only a year or two since our dear Henriot took to the study of Latin in the grammar of Denon. It is never too late to learn; and if the good Pantagruel propounded nine thousand, seven hundred, sixty-and-four conclusions, as his historian, Doctor Alcofribas, affirmeth, why should not I offer a like number for controversy?"

"Nay, I see no reason to the contrary," replied the Vicomte. "Thy conclusions will, in all probability, be as intelligible and irrefragable as those of the sophists; and, as extremes are said to meet, thou mayst be as

near to Crichton, as the line of intersection which divides the heights of folly from the depth of wisdom will permit. Meantime, pay attention to thy liege and master; for methinks he is about to bestow a gift on Crichton not unworthy of himself or of the acceptor."

And so it proved. Commanding Crichton to kneel, Henri detached the lesser collar of the Saint-Esprit from his throat, and placing the glittering badge around the scholar's neck, unsheathed his sword from its crimson velvet scabbard, and striking him thrice with the blade upon the shoulder added, "In the name of God and of our lord and patron Saint-Denis we create thee, James Crichton, Knight Commander of the holy and honourable Order of the Saint-Esprit! We do not say, support its statutes and maintain its splendour without spot. That were needless. The name of Crichton is sufficient to preserve its glory untarnished."

Universal acclamations followed this gracious act of the Monarch.

Crichton was not unmoved by this distinguished mark of Henri's favour; and the tone of voice in which his reply was delivered, plainly bespoke his emotion.

“Your Majesty has bestowed upon me,” said he, “a boon which I should have esteemed more than adequate reward for long and zealous service, or for highest desert. But as I can call to mind no such service, can discern no such desert, I must esteem myself wholly unworthy of your distinction. This consideration, however, while it annihilates all fancied claim to honourable promotion, enhances my gratitude to your Majesty. Not, as it is wont in ordinary cases, does the favour succeed the service. In this instance it precedes it; and we shall see whether gratitude prove not a stronger stimulant than interest or ambition. Devotion is all I can offer your Majesty. I have a sword, and I dedicate it to your cause; blood, and it shall flow in your defence; life, and it shall be laid down at your bidding. Emulative of your own great

deeds at Jarnac and Moncontour, beneath your banner, Sire—beneath the Oriflamme of France, it shall be my aim to make the holy and illustrious Order with which you have invested me, the proudest guerdon of knightly enterprise.”

“ We accept your devotion, Chevalier Crichton,” returned Henri. “ We rejoice in your professions, and, by Saint Michael! are as haught of your love as was our good grand-sire, François I., of the fellowship in arms of the fearless and reproachless Bayard. The ceremonial of your installation shall take place on Friday, within the church of the Augustines, where you will take the oath of the Order, and subscribe to its statutes. After the solemnity, you will dine at the Louvre with the whole assembled fraternity of the Knights Commanders, and in the meantime, that nothing may be omitted, our treasurer will have it in charge to disburse to your uses our accustomed benefice of eight hundred crowns.”

“ Sire, your favours overwhelm me—”

“ Tut ! ” interrupted Henri, “ we would not be outdone by our subjects in the expression of our admiration. Besides,” added he, smiling, “ our conduct, after all, may not be so disinterested as at first sight it would appear. Under any plea we are glad to include within our newly-instituted and cherished Order, such a name as that of the Admirable Crichton—a name which reflects more lustre on us, than our knighthood can confer upon it ; and, as freely as it was made, we accept your pledge.—We may anon take you at your word, and require a service at your hands.”

“ You have but to name it, Sire, and if ——”

“ Nay, we may ask too much,” replied Henri, with a gracious smile.

“ Ask my life—’tis yours, Sire.”

“ We may ask more.”

“ Your Majesty can ask nothing that I will not attempt.”

“ Nothing you will refuse.”

“ Nothing—by my sword I swear it ! ”

“ Enough—we are well content.”

As Henri spoke, a half-stifled sob was heard proceeding from some one near him. The sound reached Crichton's ears, and beat, he knew not why, like a presage of ill upon his heart. He half repented of his vow ; but it was too late to recal it.

Henri could scarce conceal his exultation.

“ We will no longer detain our guests,” said he ; “ this audience must be dull work to them ; and, in sooth, we are somewhat ennuyé'd by it ourselves. Let the ballet proceed.”

Accordingly, the king's pleasure being made known, the musicians instantly struck up a lively strain, the maskers dispersed to comment upon the scene they had witnessed, and the ball re-commenced with more spirit than heretofore.

CHAPTER IV.

CATHERINE DE MEDICIS.

Voilà pourquoi j'ai par quelque tems fait conscience d'écrire cet Echantillon de la vie et des actions de Catharine de Medicis — : pource que cette femme est un natif tableau et exemplaire de tyrannie en ses deportemens publics, et de toutes sortes de vices en ses plus privés.

HENRI ETIENNE. *Discours Merveilleux de la vie de Catherine de Medicis.*

— *Medicæa Virago*

Imperat, usa dolis, artibus usa suis.

Pasquil recorded in the Journal of Henri III. 1585.

“ PAR la mort dieu ! Mon cher Crichton,” said Henri in a languid tone, helping himself to some of the perfumed confectionary which he carried in his escarcelle, “ we are quite taken with the brilliancy and whiteness of your collar ; we thought our own Courtray gauderonneurs inimitable, but your artist far exceeds our Flenish pretenders. We

are critical in these matters, you 'know— Heaven having endued us with a taste for costume.”

“ By which the world has lost an inimitable tailor, and France gained an indifferent monarch,” whispered Chicot. “ A poor exchange, your Majesty. Would you but rule your kingdom as you govern your wardrobe, my liege, there is little doubt but you would *cut out* all sovereigns, past, present, and to come.”

“ Peace, droll !” exclaimed Henri, bestowing a slight *soufflet* upon his Jester. “ But, as we live ! this Admirable Scot exceedeth all our preconceived notions. None of us can compete with him, Messeigneurs, and yet we labour hard enough in our vocation.”

“ True,” replied Chicot. “ *Dum moluntur—dum comuntur, annus est.* Your Majesty will observe the progress I have made in Terence. It is not for nothing that you have acquired the titles of ‘ *Gauderonneur*

des Colets de votre Femme, et Mercier du Palais."

"Corbieu! Messieurs," continued Henri heedless of the interruption, and apparently struck with a bright idea, "we abandon for ever our pet project, the *plat Saint-Jean*, and direct you henceforth to assume the collar à la Crichton!"

"Your Majesty will then do manifest injustice to your own invention," said Crichton, "by so styling my poor imitation of your own surpassing original; and I pray of you alter not the designation of a vestment which appears to have some importance in your eyes: let it bear the name of him alone to whom the merit of the conception is due. I can by no means consent to hold honours which belong not to me; and no one would think for an instant of disputing with your Majesty the eminence which you have so justly attained, of being the best-dressed prince of the politest and best-dressed people in the universe."

“ You flatter me,” replied Henri, smiling ;
“ but still we must retain our opinion. And now a truce to compliment. Do not let us detain you, mon cher, nor you, Messieurs—we know you love the dance. The Navarraise is just struck up—that figure has always attraction for our sister Marguerite ; pray ye, solicit the favour of her hand.”

With a smile like a sunbeam, the royal Circe extended her hand to Crichton, as he advanced towards her.

That smile went like a dagger to the heart of Esclairmonde.

“ An instant, Madame,” said Crichton.
“ Ere I quit his Majesty’s presence I have a suit to prefer.”

“ Say on,” replied Henri.

“ Were my intercession in your behalf needful, you should have it,” said Marguerite de Valois, “ but your interest with the King our brother is greater than my own.”

“ Still let me have your voice, Madame,”

returned Crichton, "for my solicitation refers to one of your own sex."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Marguerite, in surprise.

"You have, no doubt, heard of the affair of the Geloso this morning at the University?"

"The brave youth who preserved your life at the hazard of his own," exclaimed Marguerite,—“Ah! how can I sufficiently reward him?”

"I will tell you how to do so—that youth—that supposed Geloso ——."

"Well!"

"Turns out to be a Venetian maiden in masquerade."

"A maiden!" ejaculated Marguerite, "Ah! this adds materially to the interest of the adventure. She must have strong motives, methinks, to risk her life for you; and it is for *her* you sue?"

"For her liberty—her life ——"

“ The life of your preserver was, I heard, endangered by the assassin’s blow,” said Henri; “ but how, or by whom, is the liberty of the girl, since such appears to be the sex of your deliverer, threatened ?”

“ By the traitor Ruggieri,” replied Crichton sternly.

“ Traitor !” echoed Catherine de Medicis, starting to her feet, and fixing a glance upon Crichton like that of a lioness—“ ha, consider well what you advance, Messire—this pertains to us — Ruggieri a traitor! — to whom ?”

“ To his Sovereign, Madame—to the King, your son,” answered Crichton, resolutely returning Catherine’s gaze.

“ By Notre Dame ! this concerns *us*, it would seem,” said Henri. “ Nay, frown not, Madame. Since his reported medication of our brother Charles’s beverage, we have ever misdoubted your Astrologer; and, to speak truth, we wonder not at Crichton’s charges; for the countenance of Ruggieri

carries treason in each mystic and intricate wrinkle. But we are slow to anger, and will not judge him unheard. But first let us know more of the fair Gelosa. How is *she* connected with Ruggieri?"

"She is his prisoner, Sire," replied Crichton, "confined within the turret, belonging to her Majesty, near the Hôtel de Soissons."

"With what intent?" asked Henri, with affected indifference.

"That, Sire, I have yet to learn; I have myself penetrated the turret—I have heard moans—I have seen her through the bars of her cell——"

"And you have dared to force your way thither!" exclaimed Catherine — "by my right hand, Messire, you shall repent your temerity!"

"The girl risked her life for mine, Madame, —my head shall be the price of her deliverance."

"We take you at your word, Messire; you shall have the girl if you will adventure

again within our tower—the sole ransom we shall exact for her—shall be your head.”

“Beware—beware,” whispered Marguerite de Valois, pressing Crichton’s hand tenderly; “as you value my love, say no more. See you not, she smiles; one step more, and you tread upon your grave.”

“It matters not,” replied Crichton withdrawing his hand from the clasp of the Queen of Navarre. “Your Majesty’s threats,” added he, addressing Catherine de Medicis, “will hardly deter me from the execution of an enterprise in which my honour, not to say humanity, is so deeply implicated.”

“Ha! you brave us, Messire.”

“No—no,” said Marguerite, imploringly—
“He does not, Mother.”

“I do not brave you, Madame,” returned Crichton, “I but uphold the oppressed. My head be the penalty of my failure.”

“Be it so,” answered Catherine, reseating herself.

“And *en attendant*, Chevalier Crichton,

you withdraw the charge of treason which you preferred against Ruggieri?" said Henri.

"No, Sire," replied Crichton, "I accuse Cosmo Ruggieri, Abbé of Saint-Mahé, of high treason, and lèze-Majesté against your royal person; of machinations against the state, of which your Majesty is the head; the which charges I will substantiate against him by proof unquestionable."

"By what proof?" demanded Henri.

"By this scroll, Sire, set forth in alchemical characters; unintelligible it may be to your Majesty, or to any one here assembled; but which my acquaintance with its cypher enables me to interpret. This scroll, exhibiting a scheme for the destruction of your life, seized within Ruggieri's retreat, upon his own table, with the traces of his own ink scarce dried upon it, furnishes proof incontrovertible of a dark conspiracy against your safety, of which this accursed Astrologer is the chief instrument. Let his person be secured, Sire; and, difficult of comprehension as the mystic letters

of this document may appear, I undertake to make them clear and evident as his guilt is black and damning, to the tribunal before which he shall be arraigned."

Henri looked for an instant irresolutely towards his mother. Ruggieri was about to cast himself at the King's feet, but at a gesture from Catherine he remained stationary, regarding Crichton with a scowl of bitterest animosity.

"Your boasted powers of logic, Chevalier Crichton," said the Queen Mother, "might have taught you, that from unsound premises false conclusions must needs be drawn. If you have no further proof against Ruggieri than that adduced from this document, your charge falls to the ground."

"Not so Madame; this cypher implicates a higher power than Ruggieri."

"It does proceed from a higher source than that of Ruggieri," replied Catherine; "from a quarter no less exalted than ourselves. That scroll is our contrivance."

“Your’s, Madame!” exclaimed Henri, in surprise.

“You are aware of her Majesty’s maxim, Sire,” whispered Chicot—

*“Il faut tout tenter et faire
Pour son ennemi défaire.—”*

Here we have an exemplification of it.”

“Question us not further, my son,” returned Catherine. “Be assured that we watch over your interests with maternal solicitude; and that if we work in darkness, we have only one aim—the maintenance of your glory and your power. Of that be satisfied. Hereafter you shall know the real purport of this scroll. Leave the cares of rule to us.”

“*Puero regnante, fœminâ imperante,*” whispered Chicot.

“This hair-brained youth has marred one of our best-laid plans,” continued Catherine scornfully; “but we pardon his indiscretion, for his zeal in your behalf, Henri. But let him use more caution in future. Zeal over

much becomes officiousness, and will as such be resented."

"The zeal you reprobate, Madame," replied Crichton, proudly, "prompts me, at the peril perhaps of my life, to tell you, even *you* are the dupe of Ruggieri's artifices. This scroll is not what you believe it to be."

"Ha!" exclaimed Catherine.

"From its tenor I am satisfied it is not the document he had your authority to prepare."

"Now, by our Lady! this insolence passeth all endurance," cried Catherine, furiously. "Henri, your Sire would have hewed off his best Knight's spurs at the heel ere your mother's word had been doubted!"

"Do not irritate yourself, Madame," replied the King, coolly. "The Chevalier Crichton's chief fault in your eyes appears to be his anxiety for our safety, the which we own we find it difficult to blame. Believe us, with all your subtlety, Mother, you are no match for Ruggieri. And we would willingly hear our advocate out, ere we relinquish an inves-

tigation which appears to us to involve such important consequences to our safety.”

Catherine grew pale, but she spoke with calmness.—“ Proceed, Sir,” said she, addressing Crichton—“ the King wishes it. We will answer you.”

“ To prove to you, Madame,” said Crichton, “ how much you have been deceived, I will ask you whether it was by your authority this image was prepared ?”

And Crichton drew forth from his pour-point a small waxen figure so moulded as perfectly to represent the person of the king.

“ Par Notre Dame de Bon Secours,” stammered Henri, growing white, in spite of his rouge, with choler and affright, “ an image of ourself—ha !—”

“ Pierced with a poignard to the heart, Sire,” replied Crichton—“ Behold where the puncture is made !”

“ I see it,—I see it,” ejaculated Henri, “ Ave Maria !”

“Sire!” exclaimed Ruggieri, flinging himself at the King’s feet, “hear me—hear me—”

“Away, infidel dog!” cried Henri, spurning Ruggieri from him; “thy touch is pollution.”

Exclamations of horror burst from the group immediately around his Majesty. Swords flashed from their scabbards; and had it not been for the interference of Catherine de Medicis, to whose knees the affrighted Astrologer clung in mortal terror, he had perished upon the spot.

“Back, Messeigneurs!” exclaimed Catherine, rising and spreading her arms over Ruggieri; “strike him not—he is innocent—on your allegiance we charge you, sheathe your swords!”

“Be tranquil, gentlemen,” said the King, who had by this time collected himself—“Par la Mort-Dieu! we will deal with this traitor ourselves—A waxen figure, forsooth! Let us look at it nearer.—By our Faith! the knave has caught our lineaments far better than our sculptor, Barthélemy Prieur!—this

dagger plunged into the heart—we have felt a strange and unaccountable oppression in that region these three days. Is this accursed image the handiwork of Ruggieri?"

"Undoubtedly, Sire," replied Crichton.

"'Tis false, Sire. I had no hand in its manufacture. By my salvation, I swear it," ejaculated the affrighted Astrologer.

"Thy salvation!" echoed Chicot, with a scream of derision—"ha! ha! thou hast long since lost all chance of Paradise!—Rather swear by thy perdition, miscreant Abbé."

"I found it within his chamber," said Crichton. "Your Majesty will treat this superstitious device with the scorn such a futile attempt against your safety merits. But this consideration will not relieve Ruggieri from the charge of treasonable practices against your life. For like attempts, La Mole and Coconnas were adjudged to the stake."

"And by the stake he dies," replied the King, "if this offence be brought home to him. The Question shall enforce the truth.

After this, Madame," continued Henri, addressing his mother, "we think you will scarce seek to advocate further the conduct of your Astrologer."

"Were we satisfied of his guilt assuredly not, my Son," returned Catherine. "But what proof have we that the whole of this accusation is not a contrivance of this fair-spoken Scot, to rid himself of a foe, for such he confesses Ruggieri to be."

"It *is* so," replied Ruggieri, "I will satisfy your Majesty of my innocence—and of Crichton's motives for this accusation. Grant me but time."

"I have said that a higher power than that of Ruggieri was implicated in this matter," returned Crichton. "That power is—"

"Forbear!" cried Ruggieri, "lead me to the rack; but utter not that name; you know not what you would do."

"Villain!" exclaimed Crichton; "you find I am too well acquainted with your crimes. I have read the secrets of your heart. I

would confront you with him you have betrayed. Would he were here to confound you with his presence !”

“He *is* here,” replied a masked figure, stepping suddenly forwards.

“The Mask !” exclaimed Crichton.

“As we live, our Mask in person !” said Henri. “We begin to have some insight into all this mystery.”

A momentary pause succeeded, during which no one spoke. The Mask at length broke silence.

“The charge you have brought against Ruggieri, Chevalier Crichton,” said he, sternly, “is false, unfounded, and malicious; and that you have made it wilfully, and knowing it to be such, I will approve upon you by mortal combat; to which, as Ruggieri’s voluntary champion, I here defy you.”

“And will *you* undertake the felon Ruggieri’s defence? will *you* draw your sword in his behalf?” asked Crichton, with a look of incredulity and surprise.

“ King of France,” said the Mask, dropping upon one knee before Henri, “ I beseech your Majesty to grant me right of combat à outrance with all weapons and without favour against the Chevalier Crichton.”

Henri hesitated.

“ Nay, my son,” replied Catherine, “ this is our quarrel—not Ruggieri’s—we are glad to find we have one sword ready to start from its scabbard in our behalf. You cannot refuse this appeal.”

“ You have our permission, then,” returned Henri: “ yet—”

“ I here, then, repeat my defiance,” interrupted the Mask, rising haughtily and hurling his glove to the ground—“ I challenge you, Chevalier Crichton, to make good your accusation with your life.”

“ Enough,” returned Crichton; “ I accept your challenge, and I counsel you, Sir, not to throw aside your mask when you draw your blade in a cause so infamous and debasing. I am well content that Ruggieri’s fate be left to

the decision of my hand. Joyeuse," continued he, "may I calculate upon your services in this matter?"

"Most certainly," replied the Vicomte; "but will not your adversary favour us with his name or title? As a commander of the Saint-Esprit you are aware you cannot exchange thrusts with one of inferior rank."

"If *I* am satisfied, Monsieur le Vicomte;" replied the Mask, haughtily, "to wave that consideration, a cadet of fortune like the Chevalier Crichton will have little need to take exceptions. We meet as equals only with our swords."

Saying which the Mask disdainfully placed his ungloved hand upon the hilt of his rapier. Crichton regarded him fixedly for a moment.

"Sir Mask," said he, at length, in a tone of cold contempt, "whoever you may be, and I have no desire to publish your incognito—whatever blood may flow in your veins, be it derived from prince or peer, I hold it cheap as water in the ignoble cause which you have

espoused—and were you base-born vassal, as I believe you to be proudly-blazoned gentleman, and your quarrel the right, it would weigh more with me than noblest lineage or loftiest heraldry—Cadet of fortune I am. Nevertheless, even the royal Henri might cross swords with me without degradation. On either side my ancestry is regal. My blood is that of the Stuart—my heritage an untarnished name—my portion, a stainless sword.—In God and Saint Andrew do I place my trust!”

“Bravely spoken,” cried Saint-Luc.

“You are satisfied of your antagonist’s rank?” asked Joyeuse of Crichton.

“We will answer for him ourselves,” said Henri.

The Vicomte raised the glove and thrust it in his girdle.

“Whom may I have the honour of addressing as your second, Seigneur?” asked Joyeuse, in a tone of constrained courtesy.

“ Ludovico di Gonzaga, Duke of Nevers and of Rothelais,” replied the Mask, haughtily.

“ Vive-Dieu!” exclaimed the Vicomte, “ this is better than I anticipated; Monsieur le Duc, I shall be delighted to confer with you on this duel.”

At the mention of his name, the Duc de Nevers, a grave and stately nobleman, wearing the full insignia of the order of the Saint-Esprit, stepped forward, in some astonishment, but, after having conversed an instant with the Mask, he advanced, and with a formal salutation took Crichton’s glove from the hand of the Vicomte.

“ Par la Mort Dieu! Messeigneurs,” said Henri, “ we had rather the whole science of astrology were exterminated, together with all its idolatrous professors, than that you had given battle to each other upon grounds so frivolous, and for a cause so unworthy of your swords. However, since you will have it so, we will not oppose your inclinations. Let the combat take place at early noon to-morrow,

within the hall of arms, where ourselves and our immediate followers will attend. Our pleasure, however, is that in lieu of the duel with rapier and dagger which, remembering the end of Caylus and Maugiron, we interdict, you break a lance together in the lists—on the issue of the third course let the Astrologer's fate depend. We will not have the life of a valiant cavalier, or of one dear to us, sacrificed in this worthless dispute. Meantime Ruggieri shall be placed under the safeguard of the walls of the Châtelet to abide the issue of the encounter—and may God defend the right!”

“I will answer for Ruggieri's attendance,” said Catherine de Medicis. “Let him be escorted to our turret; we will place our own guard over him.”

“As you please, Madame,” returned Henri; “but have a care that you produce him at the lists.”

“Fear us not, my son. He shall appear to-morrow.”

“And now, Seigneur, suffer me to say,” said the King, turning to the Mask—“Mort Dieu, vanished!—”

The figure had disappeared.

“Cousin of Nevers,” said the King, “a word—Gentlemen, a little further off, if you please. Nay, mignonne,” added he, in a whisper to Esclairmonde, “we have not yet done with you. This tiresome dispute has put you out of our head. *Your* turn will come presently—nay, mark that look! Does not that glance speak volumes?—Now, Monsieur le Duc, touching this Mask;” and here Henri’s voice became inaudible, except to him whom he addressed.

“And now for the Navarraise,” said Crichton, taking the hand of Marguerite de Valois.

“I thought you had forgotten it,” replied the Queen, smiling. “But let us go.—I am wearied of this crowd. We shall at least be alone in the dance.”

And, all eyes following their majestic figures, they swept down the saloon.

While this was passing, Catherine motioned Ruggieri to approach her.

The Astrologer threw himself at her feet, as if imploring compassion.

“We would question thee ere thou depart,” said she aloud, adding in a whisper, “this combat must never take place.”

“It must not,” returned the Astrologer.

“We will find means to prevent it. Give me the phial thou hast ever with thee—the Borgia tincture.”

“That were too tardy, Madame:—this potion you will find more efficacious. It is the same deadly mixture as that prepared, by your Majesty’s orders, for the Admiral Coligni, which you entrusted to his valet, Dominique D’Albe.”

“No more—I will find a surer agent than that timid slave,” said Catherine, taking the phial which Ruggieri slipped into her hands, “I must see the Mask to-night,” continued she. “Give me the key of thine inner chamber in the turret—I will instruct him how to come

thither unperceived, by the subterranean passage from the Hôtel de Soissons."

"The key is here, Madame," replied the Astrologer.

"Let Ruggieri be removed," said Catherine, aloud; "and a triple guard placed at the portal of our hôtel. Suffer none to go forth, nor to enter; save at our order."

"Your Highness's commands shall be obeyed," said the Captain Larchant, advancing towards Ruggieri, and surrounding him with some half-dozen halberdiers.

"And your devilish schemes circumvented," added Chicot, gliding from the fauteuil of the Queen Mother, whither he had crept unperceived. "And, now to apprise Crichton of his danger!—Nombril du Pape!—I tremble lest our Jezebel should find an opportunity of effecting her accursed designs."

Full of apprehension for Crichton's safety, the Jester was about to follow the course taken by the Scot and his illustrious partner,

but he found them surrounded by such a crowd of eager spectators, that approach to their immediate vicinity was next to impossible. He was constrained, therefore, to remain stationary. Presently a lively flourish of music told that the Navarraise had commenced; and all the Jester could discern was the tall and majestic figure of Crichton revolving with that of the Queen in the rapid circles of the dance. Round after round they whirled in the mazy waltz—the music each instant increasing the rapidity of its movements, till Chicot's brain began to spin like the giddy measure he witnessed.

Suddenly the strains ceased.

“Now is my opportunity,” exclaimed Chicot, preparing to dart forward.

At that instant he was arrested by a voice behind him. It was that of the King, with the hand of a masked maiden clasped within his own. Henri stood by his side.

“Follow me, compère,” whispered the Monarch—“I have need of thy assistance. I

shall require a mask and domino, and a hat with plumes, unlike those I am accustomed to wear, in which to disguise myself. Follow me!"

"An instant, Sire, ——"

"Not a second! Keep near me; I will not have thee quit my sight. Come, Demoiselle," added Henri, with a triumphant look at his companion—"you shall now be satisfied of your lover's perfidy."

Chicot heard not the words; but he observed the Demoiselle tremble violently as the King dragged her on.

"Malediction!" mentally exclaimed he. "Escape is now impossible! Crichton must take his chance."

CHAPTER V.

MARGUERITE DE VALOIS.

Ah! que le temps est bien changé à celui que quand on les voyoit danser tous deux en la grande salle du bal, d'une belle accordance, et de bonne volonté. Si l'un avoit belle majeste, l'autre ne l'avoit pas moindre.

BRANTÔME. *Dames Illustres : Dis. V.*

The excellency of the mein and figure of the young Sieur de Croix was at that time beginning to draw the attention of the maids of honour of the Queen of Navarre towards him.—

TRISTRAM SHANDY. *Vol. V. Ch. I.*

MARGUERITE DE VALOIS, consort of Henri of Navarre, afterwards Henri IV. of France, was, at the period of our narrative, in the full éclat of her almost unrivalled beauty. Smitten by her nascent charms, Ronsard proclaimed her in her fifteenth spring, *La belle Charité Pasithée*. Nor was the appellation

unmerited. Chiselled by the Apollonian sculptor, Aglaïa never rose upon the view more surpassingly lovely. Some of her after-admirers—(we will not say flatterers, for with Marguerite truth itself took the language of flattery)—distinguished her by the title of Venus Urania; and we might have followed in their steps, had we not been forewarned that such description—high-flown as it appears—was wholly inadequate to her matchless attractions. Hear what the Abbé de Brantôme says on the subject:—“*encore croit-on,*” writes he, “*que par l’avis de plusieurs jamais Déesse ne fut veue plus belle, si bien que pour publier ses beautez, ses mérites, et ses vertus, il faudroit que Dieu allongeast le Monde, et haussast le ciel plus qu’il n’est!*” —and he concludes his panegyric by averring, that by her side all the goddesses of old, and empresses, such as we see them represented on the ancient medals, however pompously arrayed, would appear little better than chambermaids, — (*que chambrières au prix*

d'elle!) No wonder when her chronicler sent this *éloge* for Marguerite's inspection she should return it, saying—"I would have praised you *more*, had you praised me *less*."

But due allowance being made for the worthy Abbé's constitutional warmth of style, which carried him a little into extremes, no doubt can exist as to Marguerite's eminent personal attractions: and that she ranked as beautiful amongst the beautiful, even in the age that produced Mary Stuart, is likewise beyond question. The reader shall glance at her, and judge for himself.

Marguerite's eyes—(the eyes of a lovely woman are what we always look at first)—were large and dark, liquid, impassioned, voluptuous, with the fire of France, and the tenderness of Italy, in their beams. An anchorite could scarce have resisted their witchery. And then her features! How shall we give you a notion of their fascination? It was not their majesty—yet they were majestic as those of her mother—(grace, in fact,

is more majestic than majesty's self, and Marguerite was eminently graceful)—it was not their regularity—yet they were regular as the severest judgment might exact,—it was not their tint—though Marguerite's skin was dazzlingly fair,—but it was that expression which resides not in form, but which, emanating from the soul, imparts, like the sun to the landscape, light, life, and loveliness. This it was that constituted the charm of Marguerite's features.

The Queen of Navarre's figure was full and faultless; or, if it had a fault (which however would have been none with us) it might be deemed by those who think embonpoint incompatible with beauty, a little too redundant. But then if you complained of the Hebe-like proportion of her swelling shoulders, surely the slender waist from which those shoulders sprang would content you. The cestus of Venus would have spanned that waist; and *did* span it for aught we know—Marguerite's fascination indeed would

almost warrant such a conclusion. Her throat was rounded and whiter than drifted snow — “*Jamais n'en fut veue,*” says her historian, “*une si belle, ny si blanche, si pleine, ny si charnue.*” Her hands—the true Medicis hand—(Ronsard did well to liken them to the fingers of the young Aurora—rose-dyed, dew-steeped)—were the snowiest and smallest ever beheld — and we need scarcely inform the discriminating reader what sort of feet are sure to accompany such hands; nor of what sort of beauties such tiny feet give unerring evidence. Marguerite’s feet, therefore, we need scarcely say, were those of a fairy, and the ankles that sustained them, fine and fairy-like as the feet.

Of her attire, which was gorgeous as her beauty—we dare scarcely hazard a description. We shrink beneath the perilous weight of its magnificence. Brilliants flamed like stars thick set amidst her dusky tresses. Besprent with pearls, her stomacher resembled a silvery coat of mail. Cloth of gold

constituted her dress, the fashion of which was peculiar to herself; for it was remarked of her that she never appeared in the same garb twice; and that the costume in which she was seen the last, was that in which she appeared to the greatest advantage. Be this as it may, upon the present occasion, she had studied to please—and she who pleased without study, could scarce fail to charm when it was her aim to do so. Around her fair throat hung a necklace of cameos, while in one hand *mignonnement engantelé*, as Rabelais hath it, she held a kerchief fringed with golden lace, and in the other a fan of no inconsiderable power of expansion.

We feel how imperfect is this description. Maclise, upon whom the mantle of Vandyck has fallen, and who alone could do justice to her beauty, shall paint her for you.

In accomplishments, Marguerite might vie with any Queen on record. Gifted with the natural eloquence of her grandsire, Francis the First, her own Memoirs amply testify her

literary attainments—while her unpremeditated reply, in elegant latinity, to the Bishop of Cracovia, may be brought in evidence of the extent of her classical information, proving her no unworthy descendant, as she was the inheritress of the kingdom and of the name, of the amiable and virtuous Marguerite de Valois, spouse of Henri d'Albret, King of Navarre, and authoress of the *Heptameron*, and of the *Miroir d'une ame Pécheresse*, and surnamed la Marguerite des Marguerites—or pearl of pearls. Marguerite was the friend of the arts, and cultivator of poesy; and if her predecessor could boast of the friendship of Melancthon and Clement Marot, she was not less fortunate in the devotion of Ronsard and Brantôme, besides a host of minor luminaries. But if she had many friends and panegyrists, she had likewise numerous enemies and detractors; and to discover how busy scandal was with her reputation, we have only to turn to the pages of the *Divorce Satirique*, published under the

name, and with the sanction of her husband, Henri IV.

Her life, a mixture of devotion and levity, presents one of those singular anomalies of which her sex have occasionally furnished examples; and which, without calling her sincerity in question—(for Marguerite though profligate, does not appear to have been a dissembler, like the rest of her family)—can only be reconciled upon such grounds as those on which the poet Shelley seeks to harmonize the enormities, and yet continuous prayers and prostrations, of the ruthless Cenci. “Religion” (he acutely remarks, in his preface to the noble tragedy of that name, a tragedy which, in our esteem, is worthy to be ranked with the Lear of Shakspeare) “in a Catholic has no connexion with any one virtue. The most atrocious villain may be rigidly devout, and, without any shock to established faith, confess himself to be so. Religion pervades intensely the whole frame of society, and is, according to the temper of the mind

which it inhabits, a passion, a persuasion, an excuse, a refuge; *never a check.*" Marguerite, we have observed, was no hypocrite—her undisguised excesses attest the very reverse. With her, religion was a passion. One half of her existence was abandoned to a round of indulgences—the other to exercises of devotion, or to what would bear the name of devotion. She would hear three masses a day—*une haute, les deux autres petites**—would communicate thrice a week, and perform sundry acts of self-inflicted penance: but this inordinate zeal offered no interruption to her irregularities; on the contrary, it appeared to lend piquancy to them. Satiated with amusement, she retired to pray with renovated fervour; and she issued from her oratory with a new appetite for sin.

With her after-sorrows we have no concern; nor with the darker period of her existence, when, in the touching words of the poetical jesuit, Lemoine, she became—

* Pasquier.

*Épouse sans époux, et reine sans royaume ;
Vaine ombre du passé, grand et noble fantôme.*

Our business is with the brighter portion of her career—ere care had stricken her, or sorrow robbed her of a charm.

Of the grace and elegance of Marguerite de Valois in the dance, Brantôme has left us the most rapturous particulars. With lover-like enthusiasm he dilates upon her majestic carriage, and indescribable fascinations ; and the vivid portrait he has taken of the lovely Queen (sketched at some such scene as that we are now attempting to describe) blooms, breathes, and stands before us in all its original beauty and freshness—a splendid “phantom of delight,” sparkling within that gallery of high-born dames and gallant cavaliers which he has preserved for the gaze of the world.

With Crichton’s supremacy in the somewhat trifling, but then highly estimated art which

Teacheth lavoltas high, and swift corantos,

with his perfect mastership of all its diffi-

culties—(for in those days, when Italy, Spain, and Germany, and almost each province of France contributed their quota of figures and national peculiarities, the dance *had* its difficulties) with his unequalled possession of all its graces, the reader—aware of the universal scope of his accomplishments—must be already acquainted. He was accounted the most finished proficient in the dance at a court, each member of which would probably have been considered in the same important light in any other in Europe. Henri III. was passionately fond of the amusement, and largely indulged in it. In earlier days, Catherine de Medicis had been no less partial to the dance, and Marguerite de Valois, as we know, held it in high esteem. All the courtiers, therefore, emulous of distinction in their Sovereign's eyes, bestowed unremitting attention upon this accomplishment, and it was no slight merit to eclipse in skill performers of such consummate ability. As in the hall of arms—as in the arena of learning—as in

the tourney, the chace, or other exercises in which strength or dexterity is concerned—so in the ball-room Crichton outstripped all competitors. From the inimitable “constitution of his leg,” it would seem, “that he was born under the star of a galliard.” Terpsichore might have presided at his nativity.

It was Crichton’s remarkable spirit, displayed in one of the wild and national dances of his own country, then little known, or regarded as semi-barbarian in the polite court of France, and perhaps seen there for the first time when he undertook it, that first attracted the attention of the Queen of Navarre towards him, and afterwards riveted her regards. With Crichton, it was indeed that poetry of motion—that inspiration of look and gesture (terms idly applied in these later days to the performances of the hired artist), called into play by the agency of the dance, and giving to that light and graceful pastime, its highest and most imaginative character. In him the dance was not a

medium for the display of brilliant and faultless execution of paces, and flourishing of limb. His action—his *impersonation*, we might almost say, of the melody by which his movements were guided—was fanciful, inspiring, harmonious, as the melody itself. We question whether the pyrrhic, or enoplian dance of old, or hyporchematic measure (that exquisite admixture of motion and music, of lute and footstep) was ever executed with more fervour and inspiration, or produced more thrilling effects upon the beholders than Crichton's performances. The same ease—the same unconscious grace, which accompanied his demeanour on the parade, followed him in the volte, the bransle, or the pazzameno. In each, like mastery was exhibited—in each, were the various involutions required preserved; but, change the figure as often as he might, one *expression* pervaded all—in that expression, unattainable by other aspirants, resided his superiority.

Whether upon the present occasion, Crich-

ton felt inspired by the presence and acclamations of the vast assemblage—the gaze of which he felt was fixed upon his efforts—or whether he was resolved to show how inexhaustible were his energies—we know not; but he appeared to surpass himself. Such was the springy lightness with which he bounded through the rapid Navarraise, (a species of waltz peculiar to the pleasant land from which it derived its name) that his foot scarcely seemed to touch the floor, or if it did alight upon it, it was only as Antæus acquired fresh vigour from his mother earth, to gain elasticity from the momentary contact. A movement so rapid and whirling as to have turned the heads of any less practised than the admirable Scot and his royal partner, brought the dance to a spirited and striking conclusion.

All etiquette was forgotten. An irresistible excitement took possession of the spectators—*vivats* and *bravos* resounded on all sides—the burnished roof of the grand saloon re-echoed with the plaudits; and the effect

produced upon the courtly throng by the brilliant achievements of the distinguished couple, seemed to be precisely similar to that which results from the most electrifying effects of the divinities of the ballet.

Never had Marguerite appeared so animated; even her dames of honour were surprised at her unusual elation.

“Mon-dieu! I have never seen her Majesty execute that dance with so much spirit since I first beheld it,” said La Fosseuse, “when her partner was Henri of Navarre, and the occasion her own espousal.”

“Her Majesty has all the air of a bride now,” returned La Rebours, pensively. This fair Demoiselle, whom Marguerite in her Memoirs terms “*une fille malicieuse, qui ne m’aimoit pas,*” became shortly afterwards the chief favourite of Henri of Navarre. It might be presentiment.

“Poh!” replied La Torigni, “I remember the night La Fosseuse speaks of well; by my reputation I have reason to do so. Henri of Na-

varre was a mere lump of rusty armour compared with the chevalier Crichton, who vaults in the dance as if he had stolen the wings of Icarus. Nor does Madame Marguerite appear insensible to the change. *She* look like a bride! ma foi, you ought to know better, Demoiselle Rebours: even if she have it not, your bride is sure to affect a bashfulness, and you cannot lay any excess of that sort to Madame Marguerite's charge at the present moment."

"Why no," replied La Rebours, "not exactly; but Henri makes a charming partner."

"As to the spirit with which she dances," continued the sprightly Torigni, "her nuptial ball was nothing to it. But what say you? *you* recollect that night, I dare say, Seigneur Abbé de Brantôme."

"Perfectly," replied Brantôme, with a significant glance—"then it was Mars, *now* Apollo and Venus are in conjunction."

While Marguerite de Valois remained panting within Crichton's arms, with one hand retained within his own, and her waist still

encircled by the other—with her eyes, to the neglect of all observers, passionately fixed upon his gaze, a masked Cavalier, enveloped in a black domino, and wearing a hat surmounted with sable plumes, accompanied by a dame, whose features were concealed by a violet-coloured vizard, took up a position opposite to them.

“ Do you note their looks? Do you mark their caressing hands?” asked the Cavalier of his companion.

“ I do—I do,” was her reply.

“ Look again.”

“ My eyes dazzle—I can see no longer.”

“ You are satisfied, then?”

“ Satisfied! oh—my head burns—my heart throbs almost to bursting—horrible emotions possess me. Heaven give me strength to conquer them—prove—prove him false—prove *that*—and —.”

“ Have I *not* proved it?—No matter; you shall hear him avow his perfidy with his own

lips—shall behold him seal it with his kisses. Will that content you?”

The maiden's reply, if her agitation permitted her to make any, was unheard in the din of a fresh burst of music, which struck up in answer to a wave of Du Halde's wand. The grave and somewhat grandiose character of the strain, announced an accompaniment to the Pavanne d'Espagne, a dance not inaptly named after the strutting bird of Juno, which had been recently introduced from the Court of Madrid into that of Paris, by the Ambassadors of Philip II., and which, in consequence of the preference entertained for it by Marguerite de Valois, was, notwithstanding that its solemn and stately pace harmonized more completely with the haughty carriage of the Grandees of Spain than with the livelier bearing of the French Noblesse, now greatly in vogue amongst the latter.

La Pavanne d'Espagne, which had some of the stiffness with more than the grace of the old *minuet de la cour* (the delight of our

grand-dames) presented a singular contrast to the national dance which preceded it. In the one, all was whirl, velocity, abandonment; in the other, dignity, formality, gravity. The first was calculated to display the spirit and energy of the performers; the second, to exhibit such graces of person and majesty of deportment as they might chance to possess. In both was Crichton seen to advantage: in the latter eminently so.

As, in accordance with the haughty prelude to the figure—a slow martial strain, breathing of the proud minstrelsy of Old Castile, interrupted at intervals by the hollow roll of the Moorish atabal—he drew his lofty person to its utmost height, his eyes the while blazing with chivalrous fire, awakened by the vaunting melody, and his noble features lighted up with a kindred expression, the beholder might well have imagined that in him he beheld some glorious descendant of the Cid, or mighty inheritor of the honours of the renowned Pelayo.

Advancing towards the Queen of Navarre with a grave and profound salutation, he appeared to solicit the honour of her hand, to which courteous request Marguerite, who, for the nonce, assumed all the hauteur and august coquetry of an Infanta of the Blood Royal, disdainfully answered by conceding him the tips of those lovely fingers which Ronsard had likened, as the reader knows, to the rosy digits of the daughter of the dawn. Here began that slow and stately procession from which the dance obtained its designation, and in which its chief grace consisted. Hand in hand they sailed down the saloon

Like two companion barks on Cydnus' wave,
a prouder couple never graced those festal halls. With a pace majestic as that of a king about to receive the crown of his ancestry, did Crichton pursue his course. Murmurs of admiration marked his steps.

Nor was Marguerite de Valois without her share of admiration, though our gallantry may be called into question, if we confess

that the meed of applause was chiefly bestowed on Crichton. With the fair Queen of Navarre, we have observed, this dance was an especial favourite; and justly so, for it was the one in which she most excelled. In its slow measure, the spectator had full leisure to contemplate the gorgeous majesty and resplendent loveliness of her person; in its pauses, her surpassing dignity and queenly grace were brought into play; in its gayer passages—for even this grave dance had a pleasant admixture of spirit (the sunshine stolen from its clime)—her animation and fire were shown; while in its haughtier movements, was manifested the fine disdain she knew so well how to express.

“By Apollo!” exclaimed Ronsard, as soon as the vivats which followed the conclusion of the Pavanne had died away, “the whole scene we have just witnessed reminds me of one of those old and golden legends wherein we read how valour is assailed by sorcery—

and how the good knight is for a time spell-bound by the enthralling enchantress."

" Certes, la bella Alcina was but a prototype of Marguerite," said Brantôme.

" And Orlando of Crichton," added La Torigni.

" Or Rinaldo," continued La Fosseuse. " He is the very mirror of chivalry."

" He must have more skill than Ulysses to break the snares of his Circe," whispered Ronsard.

" True," replied Brantôme, in the same tone. " It was not without good reason that Don Juan of Austria said to me when he first beheld her peerless charms:—' Inasmuch as your Queen's beauty is more divine than human, by so much is she the more likely to drag men to perdition than to save them!' " —Turning then to the maids of honour the Abbé added aloud—" The mistake in all matters of enchantment appears to be, that your knight-errant should ever desire to burst

such agreeable bondage. To me it would be like awakening from a pleasant dream. Ah! were there some good fairy left who would tempt me—you should see whether I would resist, or seek to be disenchanted!”

“ Well, of all agreeable divertisements commend me to the bransle,” said La Torigni, as that figure was struck up.

“ Apropos of temptation, I suppose,” said Brantôme; “ for *you* never look so captivating as when engaged in it, Signora Torigni. For my part I envy the Chevalier Crichton his success in the dance more than his *bonnes fortunes*. I never could accomplish a *pas*.”

“ A *faux pas* I suppose you mean, Abbé,” whispered Ronsard.

“ Indeed!” returned La Torigni. “ Suppose you take a lesson now. What say you to a turn in the bransle? That is the easiest figure of all. Our royal mistress has disappeared with her all-accomplished Scot, so my attendance will be dispensed with for the

present. We shall be free from interruption. Never mind your being a little lame—the bransle is the best specific in the world for the rheumatism. Come along. Monsieur de Ronsard; your gout I know will not permit you, or I would bid you give your hand to La Fosseuse; but you can at least amuse her with a *mot*, or, perhaps improvise a sonnet for her entertainment, upon the pretty sight we have just witnessed; and the more you stuff it with loves and doves, kisses and blisses, gods, goddesses, and heroes, till like a cup of hydromel it overflows with sweetness, the better she will like it. Your hand, Seigneur l'Abbé —.”

And, despite his remonstrances, the laughing Florentine dragged the reluctant Brantôme to the bransle.

Slowly, meanwhile, glided along Crichton and the Queen of Navarre. Neither spoke—neither regarded the other—the bosoms of both were too full; Marguerite's of intense passion; Crichton's of what emotion it boots

not to conjecture. He felt the pressure of her arm upon his own—he felt the throbbing of her breast against his elbow, but he returned not the pressure, neither did his heart respond to those ardent pulsations. A sudden sadness seemed to overspread his features; and thus in silence did they wander along, inhaling new clouds of flattering incense from each worshiping group they passed.

Their steps were followed at a wary distance by three other masks, but this circumstance escaped their notice. Marguerite thought of nothing save her lover, and Crichton's mind was otherwise occupied.

Anon they entered a small antichamber opening from the vestibule of the hall of entrance.

This room which was filled with the choicest exotics, and hung around with cages containing squirrels, parrots and other gaily plumaged birds (of which Henri was immoderately fond), was for the moment de-

sented, even of the customary lacqueys in attendance and loiterers about such places.

Marguerite glanced cautiously around her, and, seeing the room vacant, applied a small golden key which she took from her girdle, to a concealed door, in the side wall. The valve yielded to the touch—thick tapestry then appeared, which being raised, the pair found themselves within a dim-lighted chamber, the atmosphere of which struck upon their senses, as they entered, warmly and odoriferously.

A prie-dieu, cushioned with velvet, stood at the further end of the apartment. Before it was placed a golden crucifix. Over the crucifix hung a Madonna, by Raphael; the glowing colouring of which divine picture was scarcely discernible by the faint light of the two perfume-distilling lamps suspended on either side. This room was the oratory of the Queen of Navarre.

Scarcely had the lovers gained this retreat

when the valve was opened noiselessly behind them—again as cautiously closed—and three persons, who had thus stealthily obtained admission to the chamber, posted themselves in silence behind the tapestry, the folds of which being slightly drawn aside, enabled them to discern whatever might be passing within the oratory.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ORATORY.

Marie. Tu es jeune, il y a beaucoup de belles femmes qui te regardent fort doucement, je le sais. Enfin, on se lasse d'une Reine comme d'une autre.—

VICTOR HUGO. *Marie Tudor.*

“CRICHTON, mon beau Chevalier,” exclaimed Marguerite de Valois, raising her beautiful head, and gazing fondly and enquiringly into his face, “why are you thus silent and pre-occupied? Amid the prying assemblage we have quitted—with all eyes upon us, and all ears eager to catch our lightest whisper—it were well to observe such caution; but *here*, alone, unheard, unseen, this reserve is needless. Is it that your quarrel with the Queen, my mother, gives you un-

easiness? I cautioned you not to arouse her anger, but you were wilful, and would not listen to my entreaties. Catherine de Medicis is an enemy to be feared; but you need have no fear of her.—Dread not her poignards—her poisons. I will watch over your safety, and arrest the secret steel should she point it at your breast. I will provide an antidote against the infected chalice should its venom touch your lips. Be not afraid.”

“ I am not, Marguerite. I will trust to my own arm for deliverance from your mother’s assassins, while for preservation from her poisons I am content to rely upon forbearance from her banquets.”

“ That were a vain precaution. The scarf you wear—the flower you smell—the very atmosphere you breathe may become the agent of Death. Even *I* might be the instrument of her vengeance.”

“ You, Marguerite, a poisoner!”

“ Unconsciously—but you should not fall alone. I will save you, or share your fate.”

“ How can I repay this devotion ? ” replied Crichton, in a tone as if he struggled with some deep and suppressed emotion. “ I am unworthy of this solicitude. Believe me I have no fears for my own safety—no dread of poisons be they subtle as those of Parysades, or Locusta. I possess an assured safeguard against their baneful effects.”

“ So thought Bernardo Girolamo, yet he perished by the drugs of Cosmo de Medicis. His was a light offence compared with yours.—But a remedy *does* exist—a counter-poison. Henri and I alone possess it. I have sworn to use it only for the preservation of my own existence. You are my existence.—You shall have the phial.”

“ You shall not break your vow, my gracious Queen.—Nay, I am resolute in this. For me, I repeat, your mother’s wrath has no terrors. If it be the will of Heaven that I must fall by the assassin’s dagger, or by more secret means, I shall not shrink from my fate, but meet it as beseems a brave man. But my

destiny I feel is not yet fulfilled. Much remains to be accomplished. My aspirations—my energies—all tend towards one great end. Fate may crown me with success, or it may crush me in the outset of my career. I can have no fore-knowledge, though your mother's starry lore would tell you otherwise—nor, it may be, free-agency. No matter! *My* aim is fixed—and thus much of the future, methinks I can read—I shall not perish by the hand of Catherine de Medicis.”

“ Is not your destiny accomplished, Crichton?—are not your brows bound with laurels?—have you not this day achieved more than man ever achieved before you?—Are you not girt with honourable knighthood?—what more remains to be performed ?”

“ Much—much—”

“ Have you not my love—my devotion—a *Queen's* idolatry, Crichton? You are insatiate in your ambition, Seigneur.”

“ I *am* insatiate—or how should my desires extend beyond this moment ?”

“ Crichton, you no longer love me. Beware—beware; I love you fervently, but I can hate in the same degree. I am by nature jealous. The Medicis blood within my veins, fires me to love with desperation, or to resent as strongly. *As yet I only love.* But if I discover aught to confirm my suspicions—if I find that you have breathed words of passion to another, my rival dies, though her destruction cost me my kingdom—that which I hold dearer than my kingdom—yourself. I am a Queen, and, if I am wronged, will have a Queen’s revenge.”

“ Why this sudden frenzy, Marguerite?—whose rivalry do you apprehend?”

“ I know not—I would not know. I look around in dread. At the fête I am beset with fears—*here* I am assailed with new agonies. My life is one long pang of jealousy.—Have I a rival, Crichton?—Answer me—Oh! if I have one, let her avoid my presence.

“ Calm yourself, my Queen.—Banish these idle fancies —”

“ *Are* they fancies, Crichton?—*are* they idle? Methinks I feel my rival’s presence within this chamber—here—here.”

“ Shall I chide or smile at your folly, my Queen —”

“ Could she behold us *now*—what must be her thoughts —?”

“ You are not wont to be thus suspicious, Marguerite.”

“ Again I ask you are my suspicions groundless? Call to mind your attentions to the Demoiselle Esclairmonde—were they not sufficient to awaken doubts as to your sincerity to me? Oh Crichton! I have been anxious—miserable since that night; but, our Lady be praised, I am easier now.”

“ Right—right, sweet Marguerite,—but, as you *have* alluded to her, may I, without reviving your apprehensions, inquire whether Esclairmonde is at the fête to-night?”

“ She is,” replied Marguerite, with a smile.

“ I did not observe her,” said Crichton, with affected indifference.

“ Yet she was at no great distance from you.”

“ With the Queen your mother?”

“ With the King my brother.”

“ With HIM !!” ejaculated Crichton.

“ She stood by Henri’s side when he bestowed this decoration of the Saint-Esprit upon you.”

“ The violet mask !”

“ You have guessed shrewdly.”

“ And she remained with the King when we quitted the grand saloon !”

Despite his efforts to control himself, Crichton was unable to conceal his emotion. With sarcastic levity Marguerite replied to his question.

“ She *did* remain with him—and thereby hangs a story. Esclairmonde, I must inform you, has, upon her presentation to night achieved a conquest no less important than that of his Majesty. He is evidently enthralled by her ; and (jealousy apart) it must be owned she is sufficiently charming to warrant his sudden fascination. With Henri it was

decidedly love at first sight, which, ridicule it as one may, is the only true love after all. It was at first sight that I loved you, Crichton. Since she tendered her hand to the King, he has never quitted it; and, to judge from appearances, he has already made no inconsiderable progress in her affections."

"Already?" interrupted Crichton.

"She will have the post of honour at the banquet," continued Marguerite—"and will be henceforth the reigning favourite, with power absolute over all the court. To speak truth, I am not sorry for it, as it nips a rival in the bud, though the Queen, my mother, who, I suspect, had other intentions with the Demoiselle, may not entirely approve of the arrangement."

"And the King loves her?" exclaimed Crichton.

"I have not seen him so desperately enamoured since his two grand passions, la belle Châteauneuf and Marie de Clèves. Esclair-

monde bids fair, I assure you, to eclipse both her predecessors.”

“Marguerite, I implore of you to return to the fête.”

“Crichton, you love this girl,” cried Marguerite, furiously.

“I would save her from dishonour. Hear me, Marguerite!—Amid the tainted atmosphere of this court, one pure fair flower blooms and is seen for a moment—the next, a rude hand grasps it—scatters its fragrance to the wind—and levels it with the weeds that grow rife around it.—Esclairmonde is that flower—save her from the spoiler’s hand.—Have pity on her youth—her innocence. She is unfriended—alone. Be to her a preserver, my gracious Queen. You know what Henri’s love is—that he spares nought to gratify his desires. Save her—save her!”

“To bless yourself withal—never—”

“Mistake me not—let not your jealousy confound my apprehension for her safety with

other feelings, which, even if I entertained them, would weigh little with me in comparison with my anxiety for her preservation.”

“ I am sure you love her. Now hear *me* Crichton. My husband, Henri of Navarre, demands my presence. This morn a messenger arrived from the camp at Pau. My reply depends on you. Will you form one of my escort?—Say that you will do so, and I will be myself the bearer of my answer.”

“ Marguerite, to what end should I go thither. I respect the bravery of Henri of Navarre—I admire his chivalrous character, his *bonhomme*, his frankness; but having pledged myself to your royal brother’s cause, how can I enlist under hostile banners. I cannot quit the court of France.”

“ Do not equivocate, Messire—you cannot quit your minion Esclairmonde—you refuse to accompany me.”

“ Torture me not thus, Marguerite—for pity’s sake, if you will not go with me to the fête, suffer me to return alone.”

“ Go.”

“ Marguerite, farewell. I quit you but for an instant.”

“ For ever. This valediction is eternal, Chevalier Crichton.—”

“ For ever!— Marguerite — did I hear aright?”

“ Stay,” cried the Queen, after a momentary but fearful struggle with herself—
“ stay, I command—entreat you—return not to the fête. Have pity on *me*, Crichton.”

“ This delay is cruel—even now I may be too late to warn her of her danger. Henri may triumph if I tarry longer. Marguerite, I take my leave.”

“ It *is* true!” exclaimed Marguerite, with a look of unutterable agony—“ my frightful suspicions are confirmed. You have never loved me—ingrate—deceiver—never—never.”

Crichton would have spoken. Marguerite, however, impetuously interrupted him.

“ Do not forswear yourself, Messire. You cannot deceive me longer. Ah, Crichton!—Is

it possible you can have forgotten—or that you are willing to forget—my tenderness? Is it possible? but I will no longer indulge this weakness—leave me Sir—go—go!”

Crichton appeared irresolute. Marguerite continued in the same vehement tone—“ But dare not to approach your minion Esclairmonde — dare not, as you value her life, breathe aught of love or counsel within her ear—for, by my hope of heaven, if you do so—she survives not the night. Now, Sir, you are at liberty to depart—yet stay, you shall not hence alone. After what I have said, I shall be curious to see how you will attempt to succour this distressed damosel.”

“ Par la Mort Dieu! my sister, you shall not go far to witness it,” said Henri, thrusting aside the tapestry, and dragging Esclairmonde forward. “ Your own appointment, you perceive, has not been without witnesses.”

“ Henri!” ejaculated Marguerite, sternly, so soon as she recovered her surprise.

“ Esclairmonde !” exclaimed Crichton, recoiling in astonishment and displeasure.

A momentary pause ensued, during which each party regarded the other in doubt and silence. We attempt not to portray the emotions which agitated each bosom. The King alone appeared easy and unconcerned. He was at home in scenes like the present, and hummed laughingly a light air of the day. Crichton, at length, spoke.

“ Is it customary, Sire,” said he, in a tone of irony, “ with the kings of France to play the eves-dropper ? I have heard of such practices in Arabian story, but the incident is new to the annals of your realm.”

“ Certes—when they have as good a chance of being repaid for their trouble as we have,” replied Henri, gaily. “ In love and war all stratagems are considered fair ; and we have the sanction of precept and custom, if we cared for either, for our conduct. All that we desired to do was to satisfy the

Demoiselle Esclairmonde of what she terms your perfidy, and to that end we brought her hither. Yon arras afforded us an excellent screen—not a word of your tête-à-tête, or of our sister's reproaches escaped us. We thank you for your good opinion of ourselves—we thank you for your kind intentions in respect to the Demoiselle Esclairmonde, the which she holds entirely needless—and we thank you still more for proving yourself so satisfactorily the inconstant she conceived you to be. Voilà tout, Chevalier!”

“ I congratulate your Majesty upon your address,” returned Crichton. “ Few scruples appear to stand in the way of your inclinations.”

“ Pardieu! compère!” exclaimed Chicot, who formed part of the group, and who, with difficulty, had hitherto restrained himself from interference—“ our gossip, Henri, is too great a king not to be exempt from vulgar weaknesses. Delicacy has never been classed amongst his foibles.”

“ And you, Esclairmonde,” said Crichton, somewhat reproachfully — “ you have condescended to this ——”

“ Meanness, you would say,” interrupted Marguerite, scornfully. “ Give your minion’s conduct its proper term—none else will suit it. My heart told me she was beside us. The instinct of hate never deceives.”

“ You have, then, overheard our converse, Demoiselle ?” said Crichton.

“ I have,” replied Esclairmonde, blushing deeply.

“ And you are aware of the peril in which you stand,” added Crichton, looking significantly at Henri as he spoke. “ One step more and all is irretrievable.”

“ I know it,” replied Esclairmonde, distractedly.

“ Hear me !” continued Crichton, with an imploring look.

“ Traitor to both !” muttered Marguerite—
“ be warned yourself—a word will seal her fate.”

But Crichton heeded neither Marguerite's whispered threats, nor the King's glances of displeasure.

“ Esclairmonde ! ” persisted he, in the same ardent tone, “ by all that is sacred in your regards, I conjure you listen to my counsels— pause—reflect—or you are lost for ever.”

“ Tête et sang ! there is something of the Huguenot about you after all, my dear Crichton. You preach in a style worthy of the staunchest Anabaptist or Antinomian of them all, and not like the easy galliard we have hitherto supposed you. Our mignonne Esclairmonde is infinitely indebted to you for your agreeable diatribe ; but she has had ample time for reflection behind yon arras, and her choice is made. The Demoiselle prefers a royal lover with a heart, a court, rank, title, power, almost the half of a throne to offer her, to one who has none of these gifts, not even an undivided heart to bestow. Are you answered, Messire ? ”

“ Esclairmonde ! ” exclaimed Crichton.

“ Beware—insensate madman !” cried Marguerite.

“ Crichton !” exclaimed Esclairmonde, suddenly extricating herself from the King’s grasp, and throwing herself into his arms. “ To your protection I commit myself.”

“ And with my life I will defend you,” returned Crichton, clasping her to his bosom.

“ I tremble no longer to avow my love—I I am yours for ever—I will brave all—we can at least die together !” exclaimed Esclairmonde.

“ It were bliss to do so,” answered Crichton.

“ Confusion !” exclaimed the King — “ Chicot, our guard.”

The Jester reluctantly quitted the oratory.

“ Be your wish gratified,” exclaimed Marguerite, in a tone of bitter derision. “ Perish together, since you wish it. Henri, I crave a boon from you.”

“ What boon, my sister ?”

“ This boon,” replied Marguerite, kindling into fury as she spoke: “ that the work of

vengeance may be entrusted to my hands—that I, who have witnessed their transports, may witness also their pangs. I must have blood, my brother—blood—*his* blood! Call in the guard. Leave me alone with them—I will see it done. By Jesus! it will gladden me to see a sword drawn.”

“ We doubt it not, sweet sister,” replied Henri, who had now resumed all the indifference he had previously exhibited, “ as Du Guast’s epitaph bears witness. We are, however, in no mood for butchery. If we should need an executioner, we pledge ourselves to call in your aid. But, nor block, nor sword, nor poignard, will, we think, be required upon this occasion. A word will recall the Chevalier Crichton to his senses.”

“ The *sword* were best,” replied Marguerite, fiercely; “ but be it as you please. Our own particular wrong shall not pass unavenged.”

“ Chevalier Crichton,” said Henri, advancing toward the Scot, and fixing a stedfast

glance upon him, addressing him at the same time in a tone of high and prince-like courtesy, "need we remind you of your voluntary proffer of obedience to our mandates? The time is arrived when we hold it fitting to claim fulfilment of your pledge."

"Dispose of my life, Sire."

"What is more dear than life?"

"Ha!"

"You have sworn upon your sword to refuse us nothing."

"What!—what do you demand, Sire?"

"Possession of this damsel."

"Crichton!" shrieked Esclairmonde, clinging more closely to her lover, "kill me rather than yield me to him."

"I have his word," said Henri, coldly.

"He has!—he has!" exclaimed Crichton, in accents of desperation. "Take back your title—take back your honours, Sire, if they are to be bought by this sacrifice. Take my life—my blood—though it flow drop by drop—but do not extort fulfilment of a rash pro-

mise which, if you claim, you pronounce a sentence upon two heads far more terrible than death!"

"We are then to understand, Messire," returned Henri, scornfully regarding him, "that your word being rashly plighted, is not held binding on your conscience. 'Tis well. We now know how to proceed."

"Would your Majesty have me break these clinging arms, and hurl her senseless at your feet? Call your guards, Sire, and let them unloose her clasp. I will not oppose your mandate."

"'Twere better to do so," said Marguerite, "or I will stab the minion in his arms."

"Peace," cried Henri, "she relents even now."

"Crichton your word is past," said Esclairmonde, "you cannot protect me."

"My arm is paralyzed," replied her lover, in a tone of anguish.

"When that vow was uttered," continued Esclairmonde, with dreadful calmness, "I

shuddered for its consequences. Nor was I deceived. Who would place his dagger in the assassin's hand, and hope for mercy? He to whom you pledged your knightly word exacts its fulfilment—and well I know he is inexorable. Obedience is all that remains: and that you may, without remorse, obey him, I will voluntarily surrender myself. Seek not to detain me. I am no longer yours. When that oath escaped your lips, you renounced me. Think of me no more—you must not think of me, Crichton—and I command by the love you have professed for me—I beseech you not to attempt my rescue.”

“Said we not she relented,” exclaimed Henri, triumphantly taking her hand.—“As to you, Chevalier Crichton, we are really sorry for your disappointment; but we trust our Saint Esprit will, in some degree, content you for the loss of you mistress.”

“Well has it been said—place no faith in princes!” exclaimed Crichton, tearing the jewelled badge of the Saint-Esprit from his

throat, and trampling it beneath his feet :
“ their gifts, like that of Nessus, are bestowed only to destroy. Perish these accursed chains that fetter my soul’s freedom—and with them perish all sense of obligation.”

“ Grand merci !” rejoined Henri, coldly, “ our favours must be of little worth if they can be thus readily set aside, but we shall take no offence at your want of temper, Chevalier. A minute’s reflection will see you calmer. Your Scots are apt to be hot-headed we have heard, and we now experience the truth of the assertion. We make all excuses for you. Your situation is mortifying,—but give yourself no further uneasiness, we will answer for the Demoiselle’s safety.”

“ Will you answer for her honour, Sire ?” asked Crichton, bitterly.

“ Allons !” replied Henri, with great nonchalance, “ to the banquet.”

Saying which he applied a silver whistle to his lips. At the call the valve was suddenly thrown open—the tapestry drawn aside—and

through the door appeared the antichamber full of lights, with a file of valets and halberdiers arranged on either side of the entrance. At the same moment Chicot entered the oratory.

A peculiar smile played on Henri's features.

"For what do we tarry?" asked he, glancing exultingly at Crichton.

"For my guidance, I conclude," replied Chicot, stepping forward; "nothing but Folly will serve to direct your Majesty's course."

"Méchant," exclaimed Henri. And passing Esclairmonde's arm within his own, he quitted the apartment.

Crichton stood for some moments like one suddenly stunned—with his face buried in his hands. He was aroused by a light touch upon the shoulder.

"Marguerite," exclaimed he, returning the gaze of the Queen of Navarre, with a terrible look, "why remain you here? Is not your vengeance complete? You have sacrificed innocence, virtue, pure affection, at the shrine

of depravity and lust—are you not content? Do you remain to taunt me—or do you pant for my blood? Take this dagger and plunge it to my heart.”

“ No, Crichton,” returned Marguerite de Valois, “ I will have nobler vengeance. What if I liberate this maiden from her thralldom?”

“ Amazement!”

“ What if I free her from Henri’s snares?”

“ My gratitude—my life—”

“ Will not suffice.”

“ Boundless devotion—”

“ More—your love.”

“ Ask what I *can* give—ask not *that!*”

“ You abandon her, then? Forget you where she is—and within whose power? forget you Henri’s orgies—forget you those unlicensed scenes so fatal to the honour of our sex?”

“ Marguerite—no more—I am yours.”

“ Swear, if I do this, that you will no more approach this damsel as a lover—swear this by the Virgin who regards us,”—and as she

proposed the adjuration, Marguerite extended her hand towards the Madonna. "Swear—and I am content."

Scarcely were the words pronounced when Chicot appeared at the valve.

"His Majesty commands your instant presence at the banquet," said he, almost breathless with haste.

"Hence!" exclaimed Marguerite.

"Her Majesty, the Queen - Mother —" added the Jester, in an under-tone.

And as he spoke, Catherine de Medicis abruptly entered the oratory.

"Daughter," said Catherine, "we have sought you throughout the grand saloon. Why do we find you here—and thus attended?"

"Madame!" interposed Marguerite.

"We would speak with you alone—dismiss this gentleman," continued Catherine glancing haughtily at Crichton.

"Leave us, Chevalier Crichton," said Marguerite, and she added in a lower tone, "remember what I have said."

Crichton had scarcely gained the anti-chamber when he perceived Chicot. A few hasty words passed between them.

“And thou apprehendest the enlèvement of the Gelosa?” said Crichton. — “The guard report, thou sayest, that Ruggieri’s tower has been invested by an armed band requiring her deliverance to them? Difficulties multiply — no matter — I would be equal to any emergency. Where is the Mask?”

“As well might you pick out a domino in carnival time as discern him amidst your crowd of revellers. No one noted his approach, nor did any one, that I can learn, witness his departure. For my part,” added Chicot, pointing downwards, “I think he disappeared as another black gentleman is said to be in the habit of doing. Were I you, gossip, I would have my sword blessed by some holy priest ere I ventured to engage with him on the morrow, or carry a scapulary, an *Agnus*

Dei or other sacred relic beneath my pour-point."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Crichton. "He is a mere mortal foe. But hence, good gossip—to the banquet-hall—account for my absence in the best way thou cans't to his Majesty. I will be there anon."

"Make yourself easy on that score, gossip; I will divert his enquiries—but when you *do* appear at the banquet, bear in mind what I said respecting Catherine's kind intentions towards you."

"I shall not fail to do so—and in the meantime rest largely indebted to thy zeal."

"Why did you decline the counter-poison gossip? You may need it."

"'Tis too late to regret my inadvertence—I must trust to my own precautions—besides I have other designs—"

And without concluding his speech, Crichton darted from the antichamber.

Chicot looked after him an instant, and shook his head.

“ Sang de cabres ! ” muttered he, “ it has turned out precisely as I anticipated. No good ever comes of making love to two women at the same time, especially when one of the twain has the honour to be a Queen. But, not content with this, this galliard, forsooth, must saddle himself with a third. I wish him well of it ! But if he get clear of all these scrapes, and escape *Scot-free* from the poison and bowl of Queen Catherine, he will richly deserve his title of the Admirable Crichton. Corbieu ! I have never seen such a picture of jealous rage as our own Queen of Navarre has just exhibited since I beheld the *Sieur le Bole* devour the plumes of his hat for very fury, and Clermont D’Amboise break a bottle of ink upon his mistress’s eyebrow with which she had endited a *billet* to a more favoured lover. After all, her jealousy is absurd. She has already had lovers enough to content an Isabel de Bavière, or a Marguerite

de Bourgogne. What says our chronicle?—
And Chicot hummed the following ditty :—

*Marguerite.**

MARGUERITE, with early wiles—

Marguerite

On light Charins and D'Antragues smiles—†

Margot, Marguerite.

Older grown, she favours then,

Smooth Martigues,‡ and bluff Turenne.

The latter but a foolish *pas*,

Margot, Marguerite *en bas*.§

But no more these galliards please,

Marguerite.

Softly sues the gallant Guise,

Margot, Marguerite.

Guise succeeds, like God of war,

Valiant Henri of Navarre ;

Better stop, than further go,

Margot, Marguerite *en haut*.

II.

Loudly next bewails La Mole,||

Marguerite,

On the block his head must roll,

Margot, Marguerite.

* A catalogue of Marguerite's various amourettes will be found in the *Divorce Satirique*, published under the auspices of her consort, Henri IV. More than half, however, are, most probably, scandal.

† Marguerite was then of the tender age of eleven.

‡ Colonel-General of the French infantry. Brantôme has written his *éloge*

§ This refrain is attributed to the Duchesse de Guise.

|| The Sieur La Mole, surnamed ' *Le Baladin de la cour* ;' beheaded by Charles IX., it is said from jealousy. *Mollis Vita, Mollior interitus.*

Soon consoles herself again,
 With Brantôme, Bussi,* and Mayenne,†
 Boon companion *gros et gras*
 Margot, Marguerite, *en bas*.

Who shall next your shrine adore,
 Marguerite?
 You have but one lover more,
 Margot, Marguerite!
 Crichton comes—the *preux*, the wise,
 You may well your conquest prize;
 Beyond *him* you cannot go,
 Margot, Marguerite *en haut*.

Chanting these libellous strains as he went,
 Chicot slowly sought the banquet-hall.

Scarcely another moment elapsed when Catherine de Medicis, and the Queen of Navarre, issued from the oratory. The features of the latter were pale as death, and their expression was utterly unlike that which they habitually wore. Catherine was unmoved, majestic, terrible.

“Must this indeed be so, mother?” asked Marguerite in a broken voice.

“It *must*,” replied Catherine with deep

* Bussi D'Amboise.—*Formosæ Veneris furiosi Martis alumnus*.

† The Duc de Mayenne, brother to the Duc de Guise.

emphasis on the word, "Henri will, no doubt, as he is wont, carouse till dawn. By that time the draught will have done its duty. But if he survive, Maurevert and his band, which will await Crichton's coming forth from the Louvre, will complete the work. Shrink not from thy task. Our honour is at stake."

The two Queens separated. Catherine rejoined her attendants, and took the direction of the hall of entrance. Marguerite almost mechanically returned to the grand saloon.

As Catherine pursued her course she perceived a masked figure single itself from the crowd at her approach. Its stature was that of Crichton's challenger—its plumes were like those he wore—its sable cloak appeared the same. Catherine paused. The figure paused likewise.

"'Tis he!"—thought the Queen-mother, and she dispatched one of her pages to bid him to her presence.

"What would your highness with me?" said the Mask, advancing with a profound

and courtly salutation, and addressing Catherine in Italian.

“I was not deceived,” thought Catherine; “it *is* the voice. I have sent for you Signore,” added she in a bland and gracious tone, and addressing the Mask in the language he had adopted, “in order to express to you, ere I quit the fête, the lively sense of gratitude which I entertain for the important service you have rendered me. Assure yourself, Signore, your zeal shall not be overlooked. We are neither unwilling as, Heaven be praised, we are not wholly unable, to requite it.”

“Were your Majesty aware of the nature of the service I have rendered you, you would scarcely deem it deserving of your thanks,” replied the Mask.

“Do you rate your adversary thus lightly then?” asked Catherine complaisantly.

“I hold myself assured of conquest,” returned the Mask.

“The migniard Crichton dupes himself with like belief,” rejoined the Queen-mother,

“ but not with like assurance of success. The God of battles, we trust, will grant you victory, and enable you to overthrow your enemy.”

“ Amen !” returned the Mask.

“ Fall back, Messieurs,” said Catherine to her attendants—“ I have much of moment to yourself to communicate, Signore,” added she, assuming a more confidential manner.

“ Touching the *Gelosa* ?” enquired the Mask, anxiously—“ speak Madame, I beseech you ?”

“ Not here,” replied Catherine “ non può bene deliberar chi non è libero — I am about to return to my palace. You must not accompany me ; nor quit the revel at the same time. Too much caution cannot be observed. The palaces of princes are all eyes— all ears.”

“ Your glove, Madame,” interrupted the Mask, stooping to raise the richly embroidered gauntlet which Catherine let fall as if by accident.

“Keep it,” replied the Queen-mother smiling — “within its folds you will find a key, the use of which I am about to disclose to you. That glove, I may premise, displayed upon your cap, will obtain you admission to the Hôtel de Soissons. Exchange no words with the attendants—but pursue your way alone. Enter the gallery. Within a niche you will observe three statues. The central figure, that of our Sire, Lorenzo de Medicis, Duke of Urbino, revolves upon a pivot. Touch the spear within its grasp and you will perceive a subterranean passage leading to our turret of observation. Apply the key we have given you to a door which will impede your further progress, and you will find yourself in Ruggieri’s laboratory. An hour hence I shall expect you there.”

“And the Gelosa?”

“She is in safety—”

“With Ruggieri?”

“With Catherine de Medicis. She is in our charge. Crichton’s idle boast I see weighs

with you—but trust me, neither force nor stratagem will gain him entrance to our tower. Santa Maria! so easy do I feel on that score that I will give him the girl if he find means to reach her prison.”

“Yet he has adventured there already Madame,” returned the Mask, eagerly “and should he take you at your word would you part with your charge upon such easy terms?”

Catherine smiled.

“Your Majesty would almost appear to favour your enemy’s designs,” continued the Mask, jestingly.

“Non per amor ma per vendetta,” returned Catherine, in the same tone. “Crichton will never more adventure there, Signore, unless,” added she, smiling, “he come thither under *your* guidance. You shall know more of his destiny an hour hence. Meanwhile I must conclude our interview—we are observed. The banquet, too, awaits you. One caution in parting I bequeath you. His Majesty holds his

revels late, and it is often his custom to detain his guests. Should he issue his command to close the doors of the oval chamber, you will find beneath the suit of hangings which represents Diana and her nymphs, a sliding door."

" I understand your Majesty."

" A rivedersi, Signore."

" I kiss your Majesty's hand," replied the Mask, with a profound obeisance.

The figure then mingled with a group of revellers who approached them, and who were joyously hurrying towards the grand hall of banquet; while Catherine, ushered forth by a concourse of pages and lacqueys, entered her sumptuous litter, and departed from the Louvre.

THOMAS CURSON HANSARD, PATERNOSTER-ROW.





